

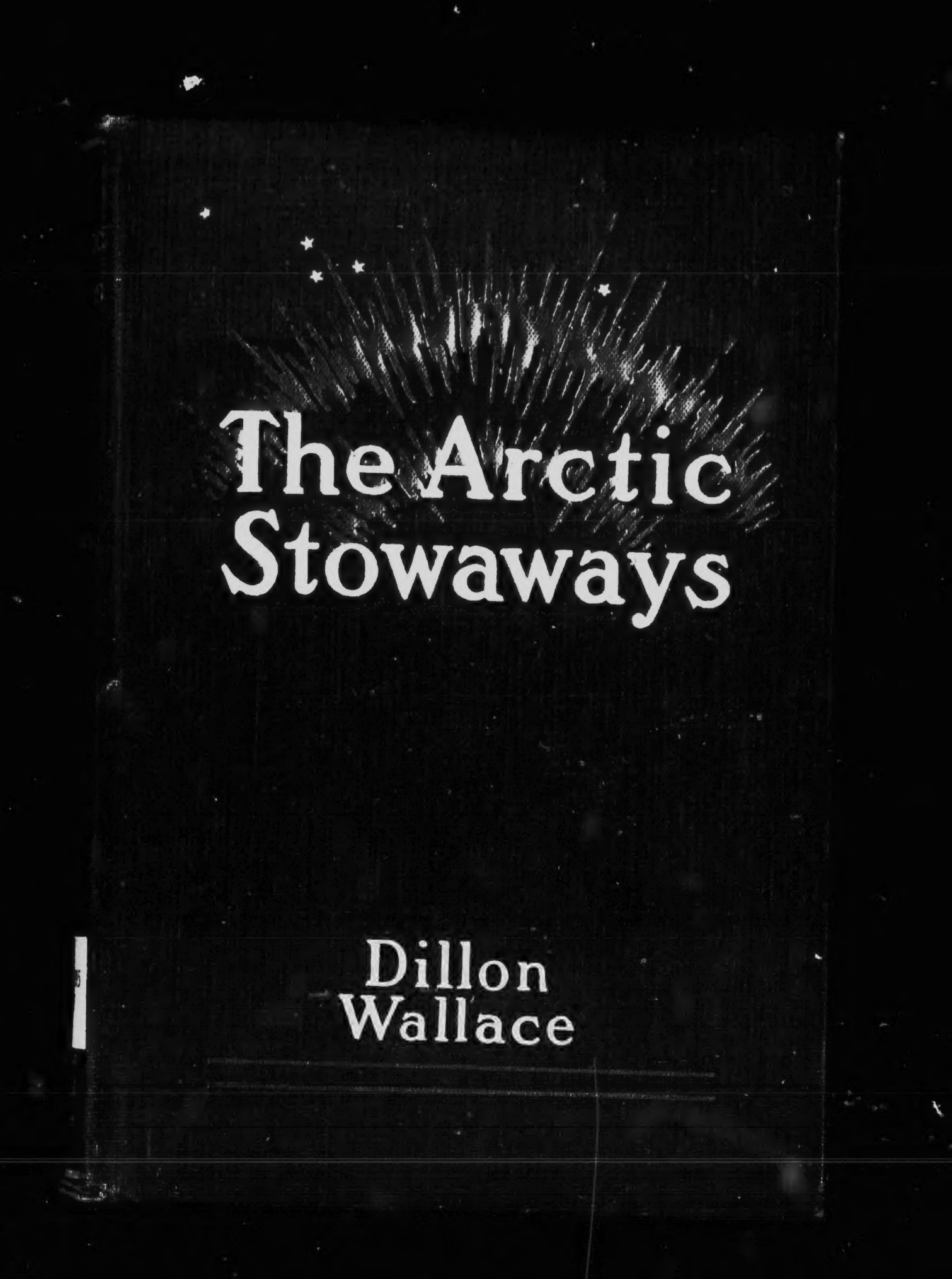
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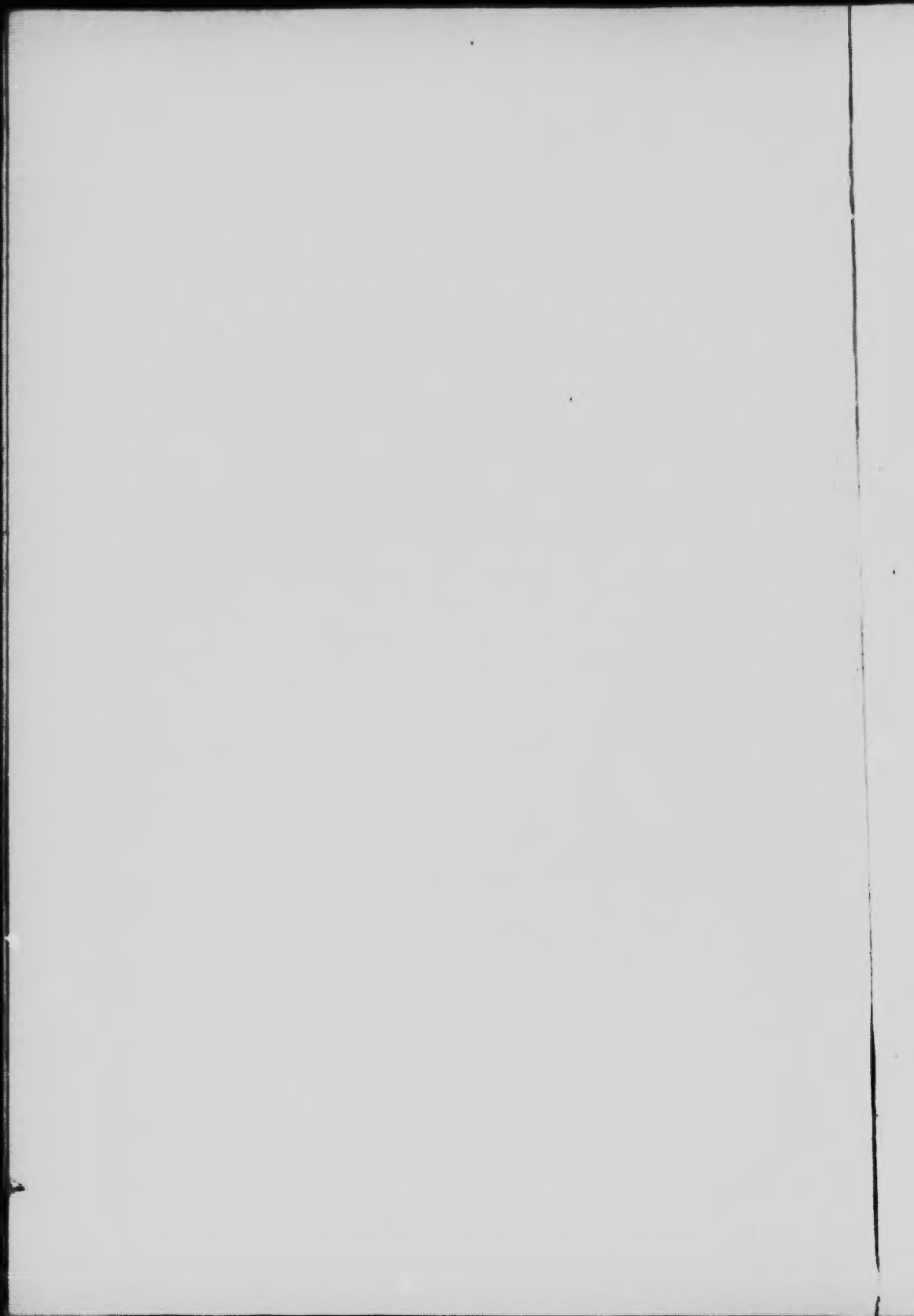
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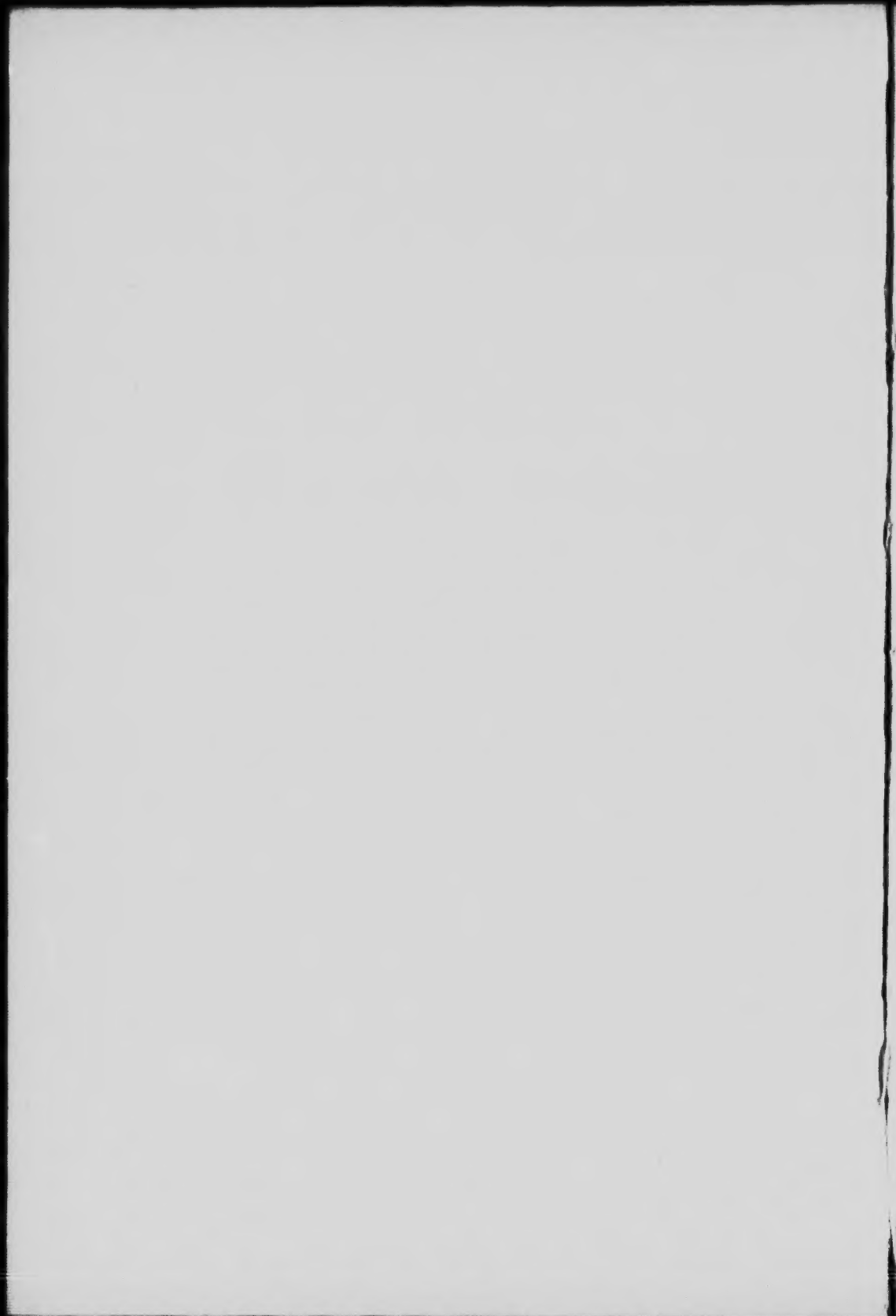
The Arctic Stowaways

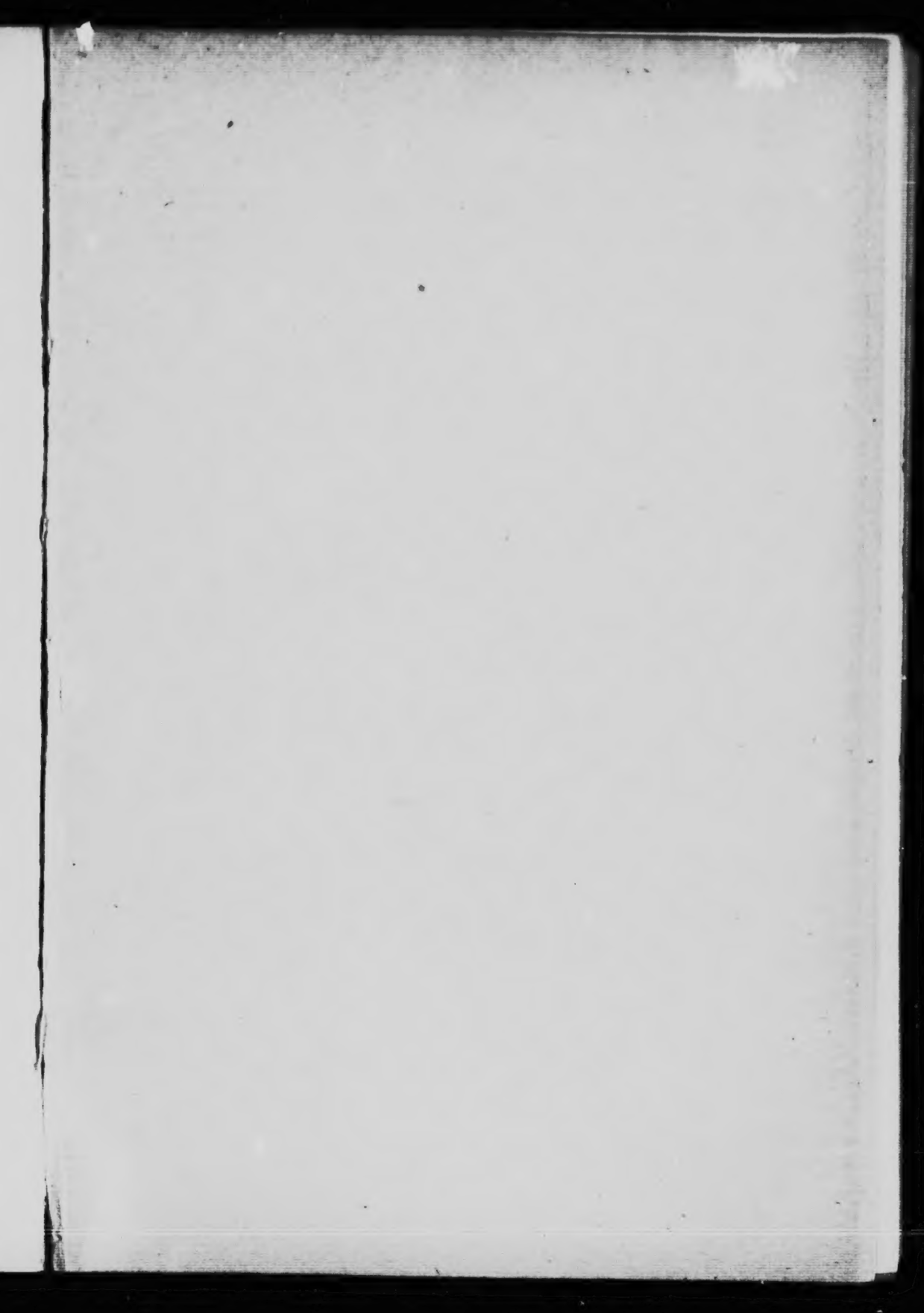
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THE ARCTIC STOWAWAYS







An evident panic had seized the Eskimos

[Page 277]

The Arctic Stowaways

BY

DILLON WALLACE

AUTHOR OF "BOBBY OF THE LABRADOR," "THE FUR TRAIL
ADVENTURERS," "THE LURE OF THE LABRADOR
WILD," "THE WILDERNESS CASTAWAYS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

FRANK E. SCHOONOVER



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THE BOYS
OF
CULVER SCHOOLS

With whom I have spent
many happy months

"Then dark they lie and stark they lie — rookery, dune,
and floe,
And the Northern Lights come down o' nights to dance
with the houseless snow ;
And God Who clears the grounding berg and steers the
grinding floe,
He hears the cry of the little kit-fox and the lemming on
the snow."

KIPLING.

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The Arctic Stowaways

CHAPTER I

THE FLIGHT

"STOP! Stop! We've hit a man!"

Harry Metford did not seem to hear. He opened wider the throttle, and the runabout leaped forward at tremendous speed. His face was rigid, and his eyes wild with terror like the eyes of a panic-stricken animal, madly and blindly fleeing from danger.

Alfred Knowles, who was looking behind, could plainly see the body of the unfortunate man lying prone by the roadside, and other men running excitedly toward the scene of the accident.

Quickly two of the men disconnected themselves from the group. One sprang to the driver's seat of a near-by automobile, the other cranked the car, leaped to a place by the driver, and the car shot out in pursuit of the fleeing runabout.

"They're chasing us! It's Jim Pickford and someone with him, in Jim's car! Stop, Harry! We'd better stop! They'll catch us anyway!"

But Harry Metford had no intention of stopping. He crowded on the last bit of power the machine possessed. Sitting rigid as a statue, his eyes fixed upon the road ahead, he seemed suddenly to have turned into an automaton. Alfred leaned toward his friend and shouted in his ear:

"Stop! Stop the car, I say! They'll catch us in the end, and it'll go hard with us for trying to get away!"

But it was of no use. He might as well have commanded a runaway horse or a hunted fox to stop. On and on they sped, leaving the miles behind them, turning corners at dangerous angles, passing other cars with a hair's breadth of margin, and once nearly running down an amazed farmer, who shouted imprecations after them.

Finally they turned into a little-traveled by-road, and near the summit of a steep hill the engine wheezed, missed a stroke, then another—and stopped dead.

"Now we're in a nice mess!" exclaimed Al, as he leaped from the car. "Why didn't you stop? We're in for it now all right!"

"Oh, Al, I couldn't! I couldn't! Those men would have mobbed me! And I'd have been arrested!"

With the dying engine Harry's nerve deserted him, and now, white and trembling, he slumped low in his seat, a frightened, hunted look upon his face.

"Well, I feel like a coward, running away that way—a heartless coward!" There was indignation and a tinge of anger in Al's voice. "They'll arrest us, never fear, and it'll go a lot harder with us for running away! And we'll deserve it! Anyhow, you will!"

"Are they coming, Al?" asked Harry in a pleading voice.

"Oh, quit that, Harry, and brace up!" Al blurted out impatiently. "No, they're not coming. We lost them back there. But we'll have to go back, and we may as well go now and face the music first as last! It's a nice mess to be mixed up in!"

"My nerve is all gone," Harry complained

as he alighted from the car and joined Al by the roadside. "I couldn't help hitting him, Al. He ran right out in front of me."

"Well, you wouldn't have hit him if you hadn't been speeding," Al retorted. "We were making forty miles an hour through that village!"

"I know I was running too fast," Harry acknowledged. "That makes it all the worse!"

"Well, it's done, and we've got to take the consequences. Perhaps he wasn't hurt much, after all," soothed Al in a sudden burst of sympathy, as he looked into Harry's woe-begone and dejected face. "Now let's find out what has happened to the car."

"The gas is out," said Harry. "I knew it was low."

"Then we'll have to get some, and run back and give ourselves up," said Al, decisively. "Do you know where we can get some?"

"New Bedford is the nearest, and that's four miles," Harry admitted dolefully. "But, Al — I — can't give myself up tonight. We'll do it tomorrow. Can't we wait?"

"All right, Harry," agreed Al, "but brace

up. Whatever we do, we'll have to get gas, and move away from here. If you want to stay with the runabout, I'll go on to New Bedford and have someone bring me back with gasoline, unless you'd rather I'd stay here while you go."

"Let's leave the car here and both go. I'm —afraid to be alone, Al. I'm all shaken to pieces. Al—you'll stick by me, whatever happens—won't you? We'll stand by each other, won't we?" There was wistful pleading in Harry's voice.

"Yes, Harry, whatever happens; and here's my hand on it," said Al impulsively, grasping his friend's hand. "Now let's leg it for New Bedford. It's growing dusk."

"Do—do you think it's the best thing to do?" asked Harry uncertainly.

"Why, of course. It's the only thing we can do. Come along," and Al, quick to decide and prompt to act upon his decisions, strode away down the dusty road, with Harry at his side.

The lads were, perhaps, eighteen years of age and vastly dissimilar in characteristics. Al was a big, broad-shouldered fellow. His every

movement displayed self-reliance and assertiveness. Harry was a full half-head shorter, slight of build, and of a nervous temperament. His face bore traces of selfishness, due, perhaps, to pampering and indulgence, and the observer would have known him at once as a proud snob — proud of what he believed himself to be, rather than of what he really was.

"Can't you cut smoking out?" said Al, as a match flared up in the twilight and Harry lighted a cigarette. "If you'd cut cigarettes out you wouldn't be so nervous, and if you hadn't been so nervous you wouldn't have hit that man today. You're getting to be a regular smokestack."

"They don't hurt me," Harry asserted, as he inhaled a mouthful of smoke.

"Yes they do," insisted Al. "You're as nervous as an old cat, and cigarettes cause it."

Harry made no answer, but continued puffing his cigarette, and they went on in silence until, at the end of an hour's brisk walk, they reached the outskirts of New Bedford.

"Let's take this car," said Al, as a street car halted at a crossing.

"Let's do," agreed Harry; "I'm tired to a frazzle."

When they presently alighted in the center of the city, and found a garage, the man in charge informed them that he would be unable to send a car with them to their stalled machine until the following day. And so it was at every place they visited, until at length Al declared:

"We'll have to stay here tonight, Harry. There's no other way out of it. We'll telegraph your mother and my father where we are, so they won't worry about us, and then get something to eat and find a room."

"Yes, let's do," and Harry was evidently relieved. "It'll put off our trouble so much longer—and I'm afraid to go back."

"Then let's do our telegraphing, and eat," suggested Al. "I'm hungry."

"Have you any money?" Harry suddenly asked. "I haven't."

"Twenty-four cents," confessed Al.

"What! Only twenty-four cents? What shall we do?" and the two stopped and looked at each other in consternation.

"We can't telegraph, after all!" said Al.

"Nor get a room for the night," said Harry.

"Do you know anyone here we could go to?" asked Al.

"There's Mr. Thorn—but we can't find him until he comes to business in the morning. He lives out of town."

"Then there's nothing to do but make the best of it. Let's get some sandwiches with the twenty-four cents, and then see if we can find some corner to sit the night out."

Presently they discovered a cheap lunch room, and after indulging in two sandwiches each, wandered out into the street. For a long time they walked in silence, until they found themselves at the water front. The wharves were deserted and lonely. Somewhere in the distance a great clock struck one. They were weary and sleepy.

"I wonder," Harry suggested, "if we couldn't find a place to sit down."

"I was thinking of that myself," said Al. "Let's go down on this wharf."

A big schooner lay alongside, and they crouched in a dark corner, under the shadow of the schooner. It was a relief to rest, but a

damp, cold breeze was blowing in from the water, and presently they were both ashiver.

"What do you say," said Harry, at length, "to climbing aboard the schooner? There's a light burning, and maybe the watch will give us a place to sleep until daylight."

"All right; I'm game for it," agreed Al. "Anything is better than this. Come on."

A lantern, hanging at the foremast, shed a dim light over the deck. The watch was nowhere in sight, but an open hatch with a ladder leading down attracted Harry's attention.

"We might go down there," said he. "We'll be out of the wind, and I'm sure they won't care when we explain why we did it, if they find us before we get away in the morning."

"All right," said Al, "let's do."

Upon descending the ladder a little way they discovered that the hold was nearly filled with cargo. It was stuffy and close, but the warmth was pleasant, and stretching themselves upon some bags they immediately fell asleep.

An hour later men were busy on deck, lines were cast off, an active little tugboat came puff-

ing alongside, and as the schooner was towed down the harbor the hatch was closed and battened down.

And quite unconscious of it all, Harry and Al, sleeping upon the bags below decks as soundly as ever they slept, were carried to sea, and to a new place in life, destined to take part in hardships and adventures of which they had never dreamed.

CHAPTER II

PRISONERS

HARRY awoke to find his bed swaying in a mysterious manner. In the first moments of returning consciousness he believed that he was in his own bed at home, and he vaguely wondered what strange thing had come to pass that it should behave in this unseemly fashion.

Then suddenly there burst upon him a full recollection of the occurrences of the previous afternoon and evening—how he had run the man down with his car, his wild flight from pursuit, the abandonment of the car, the long tramp to New Bedford, the weary hours which he and Alfred had spent wandering through the dark streets, and how at last they had taken refuge upon the wharf, and finally in the hold of a vessel.

He sat up and looked wildly about, but only darkness surrounded him—the dense darkness of a dungeon. Not a ray of light could

he see. Then there flashed upon him a realization of the horrible truth. The hatch had been closed, the ship had sailed, and the rolling motion left no doubt in his mind that they were already outside the harbor upon the open sea.

In a frenzy of despair he reached for Alfred and shook him.

"Al! Al!" he almost shouted, "Wake up! They've closed the hold! We're shut in! We're shut in!"

"Ugh! Ugh! What's up?" Al asked, sleepily.

"They've closed the hold! The vessel has gone to sea!"

"What!" exclaimed Al, suddenly awake, and sitting up with a jerk. "What did you say?"

"We're trapped in the hold! They've closed it! The vessel is at sea!"

"Jiminy!" was all Al's emotions permitted him to say.

"We've got to get out!" and Harry attempted to rise, but a roll of the schooner sent him sprawling upon Al.

"Look out where you're going!" exclaimed Al, in some irritation. "Don't walk all over a fellow!"

"Well, make a move then! We've got to get out of this and have them put us ashore before they get so far from land they can't."

"Wait a minute, till I strike a match, so we can see where we are," suggested Alfred.

By the dim light of the match as it flared up they discovered, not far from where they sat, the ladder by which they had descended into their prison, and above it the tightly closed hatchway. They discovered also that there was not sufficient headway between the cargo and the deck to permit them to stand erect, and that their quarters were exceedingly narrow.

"The only thing for us to do," said Al, when the match had burned out and they were again surrounded by darkness, "is to pound on the hatch and shout as loud as we can, until some one hears us on deck. Come ahead, and let's try it."

They crawled upon hands and knees over the uneven medley of barrels and boxes until Harry, groping ahead, came into contact with the stationary ladder.

"Here we are!" said he. "The hatch is right over our heads."

"Now," directed Al, "let's make all the noise we can."

But their knocking had small impression upon the heavy planks, and the sound of their voices seemed not to pass beyond the narrow confines of the hold. No response came from above, and no movement could they hear on deck.

Discouraged at last with their seemingly useless effort, and with knuckles sore from pounding and throats hoarse from shouting, they sat down exhausted and discouraged.

"It's no use," said Al. "The planks are so thick we might as well knock upon a stone wall. I suppose they've battened down the hatch, too, and they'll never hear our shouts above decks. We've got to try something else. We're in a fine fix!"

"Yes, a *fine* fix! And I wouldn't have been in it if you hadn't wanted to come down here last night!" Harry blurted, in baffled and angry despair.

"I wanted to come down!" Al retorted.

"You were the first to say anything about it! I wanted to come, but I guess I didn't want to come any more than you did."

Harry did not answer. He recognized the truth of what Al said, but in a vague way he felt himself injured. He did not remember that Alfred was as badly off as himself. The thought uppermost in his mind was his own immediate physical discomfort. And it did not occur to him that Alfred could suffer equal discomfort. It was his habit of life to think of himself first, and others afterward. His father was dead, and he, the only son of a wealthy, doting mother, waited upon all his life by servants, and lavishly supplied with money, was to a large degree selfish and irresponsible.

"What's the good in quarreling?" Alfred asked, after several minutes of silence. "We're in this mess together, and we've got to stick together and work together if we're ever going to get out of it."

"I suppose we've got to."

"I've got some matches, and I'll light 'em, one after another, while we see if there's any

other way out of here. We'll both look now."

Several matches were lighted, but no other possible opening was discovered, and they sat again in the darkness, which seemed denser than ever.

"It looks as though we're in for it, and I suppose waiting is our medicine, and we'll have to take it," said Al.

"And starve!" ejaculated Harry. "I'm half-starved now."

"Let's see if we can't find something to eat," Al suggested.

More matches were lighted, with the discovery that the bags upon which they had made their beds during the night contained sea biscuit, or hardtack, and munching these their hunger was appeased.

Hours passed. Sometimes they slept. At intervals during wakeful periods they heard movements upon the deck above them, and at these times they renewed their shouting and pounding upon the hatch. But nothing came of it, and they sank down each time more miserable than ever.

Thirst asserted itself. Their mouths became parched and dry. Their tongues grew thick, and it seemed to them at last that they would go insane. At these times they would shout and shout, until their shouts sank into whispers, but the effort brought relief to their nerves.

"Oh, if I'd only run my car slower!" wailed Harry. "If I'd only been more careful I wouldn't have struck the man, and I wouldn't have been here now!"

"We're both getting properly punished," said Alfred.

"Maybe we'll die here," said Harry, hot tears trickling down his cheeks.

"Well, we're a long way from it yet!" declared Al, with a stout heart. "It won't do any good to lose our nerve, and we can stand it for awhile, anyhow."

And so time wore on—slowly—slowly—until they lost all record of it, and the hours of their imprisonment seemed to them as days, and days as weeks.

CHAPTER III

GHOSTS, RATS, AND STOWAWAYS

"CAPTAIN Mugford," said Mr. Jones, chief mate of the schooner *Sea Lion*, as he and the Captain and Mr. Dugmore, the second mate, sat at table and the Captain dished out the porridge, "there's a lot of grumbling for'ard, sir, and I'm afraid it's going to 'lead to trouble. The men claim the vessel's ha'nted. I thought I was going to have a mutiny on my hands this morning, and I had to threaten Billings with irons. I'm afraid we're going to have trouble before we're through with it, sir."

"Ha'nted! Ha'nted! Mutiny! On my ship? I won't have it, sir! No, sir! No! Pish and fiddlesticks!" roared Captain Mugford, his bristling iron-gray moustache rising like the quills of a porcupine, and his great shaggy eyebrows drawing together in a scowl, while he flourished the serving spoon in midair, as emphasis to his explosive remarks, and glared

at Mr. Jones. "What does it mean, sir? What is all this foolishness about?" he demanded.

"In the first place, they claim, sir, that this is the thirteenth voyage of the *Sea Lion*—"

"Bosh! Bosh!" interjected Captain Mugford. "What if it is her thirteenth voyage! Pish and fiddlesticks!"

"And," continued Mr. Jones, "we sailed on the thirteenth of the month, and —"

"What of it? What of it? Pish and fiddlesticks! *Pish*, I say, sir! *Pish*! Don't listen to such nonsense, sir! Pish and *fiddlesticks*! The best voyage I ever made I began on the thirteenth." Captain Mugford was undoubtedly irritated. He always accentuated "fiddlesticks" when particularly annoyed.

"The men say they wouldn't mind that, sir, but there's thirteen in the deck crew. The man that was taken sick, sir, the night before we sailed, and was left behind, would have made fourteen."

"Thirteen, sir! Thirteen in the deck crew, did you say?" Captain Mugford set down his cup of coffee and stared again at Mr. Jones,

but a look of real concern was now upon his face. He could rise above the superstition of the thirteenth voyage, and the thirteenth day of the month, but these, taken in conjunction with the coincidence of a fateful thirteen in the deck crew, shook even his boasted disregard for the old-time superstitions of sailors.

"Yes," said Mr. Jones, with undoubted satisfaction that at last he had made an impression upon the hard-headed Captain; "yes, sir, thirteen. But I think that would have escaped the notice of the men, sir, if they hadn't just found out that Hiram Hodges used to be a sky pilot."

"A—sky—pilot!" There was at last a note of real consternation in Captain Mugford's voice.

"Aye, sir, a sky pilot," repeated Mr. Jones, solemnly. "He never was fully articulated, sir. A sort of a third mate, so to speak. They call them 'lay preachers' ashore, or something like that."

"Huh!" grunted Captain Mugford, taking new heart, "that don't count! If he never was

articled as a sky pilot, that don't count, sir. No cause to worry! Not at all, sir!"

"I think we could have got along with them, sir, even at that—" and Mr. Jones paused with the assurance of one about to deliver a knock-out blow, "if it hadn't been for the strange noises they've been hearing."

"Strange noises? What strange noises? What do you mean, sir?" and Captain Muford's questions followed one another like rapid explosions. He was now plainly worried.

"The men have been hearing strange noises from below decks, sir," explained Mr. Jones. "They claim they heard them shortly after we put to sea, and now and again, night and day, ever since. I've heard them myself, sir. They seem to come from around the for'ard hatch."

"Rats, sir! Rats! Undoubtedly rats! That's what makes the noise, sir! Dog rat 'em!" The Captain's voice was brave, but his attitude suggested a boy whistling to keep up courage.

"No, sir; rats never could make that sort of noise. It's more like human voices, away off. It's very strange, sir."

"Well, sir! Well! This is strange! Why didn't you lift the hatch, sir, and investigate?"

"It's battened down, sir, and I couldn't believe there was anything there, sir, to make the noise — anything we could *find*, sir."

"We must look into this. We must look into it, Mr. Jones. Can't have any mysteries on this ship, sir! No, sir! I don't believe in 'em, sir! Don't believe in 'em!" But the Captain's tone betrayed the fact that he was still whistling for courage, and any seaman will tell you he had good cause for deep concern with this fateful combination of thirteens, a possible sky pilot aboard his ship, and weird, uncanny noises issuing from below decks.

The *Sea Lion* of New Bedford, Captain Elias Mugford, destined for Arctic seas, had sailed from her home port at half-past four o'clock on the morning of July thirteenth, provisioned for a two years' voyage, and for three days and nights had been ploughing northward before a good breeze. In addition to her captain, two mates, a cook, a cook's helper and a cooper, her crew normally consisted of fifteen men. But at the moment of sailing it was

discovered that one man had deserted; and, as Mr. Jones, the mate, explained to the Captain, another had fallen so ill that it became necessary to leave him ashore. Thus it came about that she now carried a crew of thirteen.

The *Sea Lion* was designated a whaler, one of the last trailers of that glorious fleet that in bygone years sailed from New Bedford to scour the seven seas for whales, and never failed to find a full measure of adventure.

But in these days whales are scarce, and the *Sea Lion* was by no means to confine her activities to a search for whales. She was also a trader, and whaling was indeed but incidental to the purposes of her voyage. She was, in fact, in quest of anything that would garner profit for her owners, whether whales, furs, ivory, or seal oil.

And so it came to pass that in her hold was stored, not alone the necessary provisions for her crew, and the staves, hoops and heads which the cooper was to fashion at the proper time into barrels to contain oil, but also a varied cargo consisting of all manner of trading goods likely to be of use to the Eskimo

tribesmen whom she would visit, or likely to appeal to their savage taste or fancy. It was foreordained, therefore, that the *Sea Lion*, no less than her predecessors of the bygone and almost forgotten years, should experience her full share of adventure.

While Captain Mugford and Mr. Jones were conversing, Mr. Dugmore, who wore a long, sad face and a grizzled beard, devoted his undivided attention, in solemn and gloomy silence, to his gastronomic duties; or, as he would himself have expressed it, to "stowing his private hold" with ample quantities of porridge, bacon, potatoes, bread, and coffee to meet the requirements of a voyage from breakfast to dinner. He had, however, been a keen and interested listener, for the subject under discussion appealed to him as one of prime importance.

"Now, it's my opinion, sir," said he, draining his coffee cup and affectionately stroking his beard, "that we won't find anything in the hold that we didn't put there. The noise comes from an invisible source, so to speak. That's my opinion, for what it's worth, and I beg to

differ from you, sir, when you suggest it's rats."

"Invisible? Invisible source? What do you mean by 'invisible source,' sir?" and there was apprehension in the Captain's voice.

"Ghosts, sir. Ghosts," and Mr. Dugmore pronounced the word with vast solemnity. "I have no doubt, sir, that the men are quite right when they say the vessel is haunted."

"Pish and fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Captain Mugford, but without his former positiveness and vim.

"You may say so, sir," continued Mr. Dugmore dismally, "and I have no wish to dispute your opinion, so to speak, when you pronounce it 'pish and fiddlesticks,' but it is my firm belief this vessel is haunted. The sounds we hear below decks come from a supernatural source, and are a warning, so to speak, that the vessel is doomed, and will never see port again."

"Pish and fiddlesticks!" repeated Captain Mugford, with a fresh burst of courage. "We'll look for the ghosts, and we'll find they're rats! We'll look at once."

As they rose from the table Mr. Dugmore shook his head slowly, with the air of one who knows, and is sorry for the unbeliever's obstinacy. Mr. Dugmore had done his duty. There were ghosts in the hold, he was quite sure, and he was also quite gloomily sure that with ghosts in her hold the *Sea Lion* was doomed to disaster. But for his part he could not help it. He had warned Captain Mugford, and if Captain Mugford did not choose to profit by the warning, well and good.

They ascended to the deck, Captain Mugford in the lead, Mr. Jones and Mr. Dugmore following in the order of rank, and in this formation proceeded forward to the hatch.

"Now," said Captain Mugford, "we'll have this hatch up in a jiffy. Here! Open this hatch! Open it up! Step lively there!"

Four seamen ran forward, but had scarcely laid hold of the hatch when a muffled sound from below caused them to release it and spring back.

"Open her up! Open her up!" shouted Captain Mugford, impatiently. "What's the matter with you? What are you afraid of?"

"There's ha'nts below decks, sir!" declared one of the men. "Don't you hear 'em, sir?"

"Pish and fiddlesticks!" roared the Captain. "Up with it! There's some one shut in there! Don't you know voices when you hear 'em? Ha'nts! Ghosts! Pish! It's men! Up with it! Step lively now! Up with it!"

Like men walking upon a mine that is about to explode, but afraid to disobey, the sailors loosened the hatch and lifted it aside. Immediately it was removed the drawn and haggard faces of Harry and Al, who were now able to stand erect, rose to the level of the deck. With the sudden transformation from dungeon darkness to the broad light of day, they stood blinking and half-blinded. For a moment there was silence, and then Captain Mugford bel-
lowed:

"Stowaways! Two of 'em! On my ship! Get out of that! What you standing there for? Up here on deck! Up, I say!"

Weak and ill, still blinded by the light, they silently groped their way up the ladder.

"Stowaways! A fine pair of 'em!" roared

Captain Mugford, when presently they stood before him.

"Water! Water!" gasped the unfortunates.

"Eh! Ugh! Yes! Yes! To be sure!" ejaculated Captain Mugford, sympathy for the young stowaways and solicitude for their health and comfort displacing his first burst of irritation, the moment he realized their condition. "Don't you hear what I say? A mug of water! Step lively now! Bring a mug of water!"

Then turning to Al and Harry he continued in a milder tone, which he undoubtedly meant to be soothing:

"No water down there, young fellows? Dry place in the hold, eh? Pretty badly off. But we'll fix you up. Fix you up in a jiffy!"

"Water! Water!" they begged.

"Yes! Yes! Here it comes. Not too much at once! Half a mug each! Too much'll make 'em sick," cautioned the Captain, as a sailor appeared with two mugs of water. "Little at a time, and often."

"Mr. Dugmore," he directed, when they had drunk, "take these stowaways forward!

Tell the cook to feed 'em. They'll be all right in a day or two!"

Captain Mugford's moustache no longer had its porcupine-quill effect, when the officers' mess assembled in the cabin for dinner. He was decidedly in good humor, and, turning a beaming, fatherly countenance upon the second mate, he inquired:

"Well, Mr. Dugmore, what do you think of your ghosts? Fine pair of ghosts, Mr. Dugmore has down forward, Mr. Jones!"

"At any rate they're not rats, sir," and Mr. Dugmore assumed an air of great dignity.

"Rats! To be sure they're not rats! Who said they were rats? I won't have any man on my ship spoken of as a rat! No, sir! Who called them rats, sir?" and the Captain was highly indignant in an instant.

"You said they were rats, sir, when I said they were ghosts, before either of us knew rightfully what they were, sir, so to speak," explained the second mate, in the tone of one who has the best of an argument.

"Pish and fiddlesticks! Figure of speech! Figure of speech!" exclaimed the Captain,

adding, with a burst of satisfaction, "Lucky old ship, this! Always was lucky! Starts out short-handed, and turns up at sea with full crew! How do the men feel now, Mr. Jones? No more trouble, is there?"

"They've taken it as a good omen, sir, and I'm sure there'll be no more trouble," said Mr. Jones. "These stowaways will fill the crew to fifteen, though they're no doubt landsmen, and we'll have to break them in."

"We'll break 'em in!" predicted Captain Mugford, with satisfaction. "See to it, Mr. Dugmore. Don't let them loaf, sir. Let 'em have a good sleep. That'll fix 'em all right. Then put 'em to work. We'll break 'em in!"

And the three turned their undivided attention to corned beef and cabbage, and for a time dismissed the subject of the stowaways.

CHAPTER IV

MR. ADOLPHUS PUDDINGFORD SPUDDINGTON

ALFRED and Harry were weak and dizzy, and uncertain on their legs. For three days and nights they had breathed the poisoned atmosphere of the closed hold. Their mouths were parched and their lips cracked with the fever of unsatisfied thirst, and their unaccustomed eyes were half-blinded by the brilliant rays of the sun.

And so, with dulled senses, and comprehending only the blessed fact of their release, they gave no thought to home or the future as they followed Mr. Dugmore forward. Even the trumpet-like tones of Captain Mugford, attuned to override the roar of tempests, had failed to rouse them to a realization of the fact that they were looked upon and were to be treated as ordinary stowaways.

Mr. Dugmore was duly impressed with their condition. He told them in his own solemn manner that they were in a "bad way,"

but cheered them with the assurance that "sleep and grub" would mend their "inner works," and give them their "sea legs," and then, guiding them down a narrow companion-way, into the confined quarters of the fore-castle, he at once turned the immediate responsibility for their welfare over to "Spuds," the cook, and departed.

"Spuds," who had come from the galley at Mr. Dugmore's call, was an exceedingly corpulent person, with a florid face and a moist bald head. He was enveloped in a great apron which had once been white, but, long innocent of a visit to the laundry, was now of a decidedly muddy cast. The apron accentuated Spud's corpulency to such an extent, indeed, that he now towered before the distorted vision of the youths as a veritable mammoth.

"Sit in, lads," he invited, indicating seats at the fore-castle table. "My name is *Mister* Adolphus P. Spuddington. What be your'n?"

"My name—is—Alfred Knowles," said Alfred, his tongue still thick, "and—my friend—is Henry Metford."

"Al-fred and Hen-nery," repeated Mr.

Spuddington, running the forefinger of his right hand across his high, perspiring forehead and deftly throwing the accumulated moisture upon the floor. "The names of two English kings. I read history, I do. That makes it easy to remember names. I make it a rule t' know the names of all I feeds. Sit still, now, where you be, an' Shanks'll serve you. Shanks is my helper. Secin' he might overlook tellin' you his real name, I'll mention of it. It's Peter Higgle, but you can make free and call him 'Shanks,' like we calls him. The 'P.' in my name, I forgot to mention, stands for Puddingford. My full name is *Mister Adolphus Puddingford Spuddington*. My folks came from down Boston way, and my ancestors came over in the *Mayflower*."

With this information Mr. Spuddington again ran his finger over his brow, removed the freshly accumulated moisture as formerly, and retired.

Presently the already introduced Shanks appeared, and the origin of his nickname was at once manifest. He possessed a pair of excessively long legs, with an excessively big foot

attached to the end of each leg. The feet were so large, indeed, that the observer was prone to marvel at their size and to wonder how the thin legs to which they were attached could manipulate them. Permitting the gaze to range some six feet, to the other extremity of Shanks, attention was certain to be arrested by a long weather-vane nose, a thatch of tawny yellow hair, and a pair of huge, outstanding ears, any one of which extraordinary features was no less marvelous in its way than the legs and feet.

Shanks proceeded silently to place a bowl, a spoon, and a tin mug before each lad, and then disappearing returned with a dish of soup, a plate of ship's biscuit and a pot of strong coffee, which he set upon the table within their reach.

"There," said he, when all was in readiness, "go to it. You both look like you needed it. You're pretty well bunged up—both of you."

"May we have some water?" asked Harry.

"All you want, if you don't drink the ship dry. We can't get any more till we make har-

bor somewhere, and there's no knowin' when that'll be."

The boys were in no humor to talk. They drank water, until Shanks warned them that they were "takin' on too much water ballast." Then they ate silently. And when they were through Shanks directed them to two of several berths ranged on either side of the room, remarking, as he did so:

"Spuds says for you t' turn in and get in shape for duty. I guess it won't hurt you to sleep some, the way you look. You must have had a hard pull of it in there with the cargo."

"Duty?" asked Harry. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, you'll find out soon enough," cheered Shanks.

But they were too ill and sleepy to ask further questions, and crawling into the berths were quickly lost in deep and restful slumber.

Once Al awoke. It was night. A smoky kerosene lamp shed a dim light over the quarters. A man in a bunk was snoring uproariously. For a moment he wondered where he was, and what strange thing had taken place.

Then, as a dream, he recalled the rescue, Captain Mugford, Mr. Dugmore, the enormous Spuds and the remarkable Shanks, and with a sigh of relief he realized that he felt vastly better than in a long while. His brain had cleared, and his tongue had almost, if not quite, resumed its normal size. Harry was sleeping in an adjoining berth, and Al turned upon his side and to sleep again, with the thought:

"We've been properly punished for what we did. We had our medicine, and it was a pretty tough dose, but we deserved it, and I'm glad it's over."

But their experiences were only begun. Great things were yet to happen. In the strange land for which they were bound, and among strange people, their souls were to be tried by adventures and hardships that would call forth all the fortitude and manhood they possessed.

CHAPTER V

SHANKS

“YOU fellers’ll sleep yourselves t’ death. There goes four bells.”

Al and Harry sat up in their bunks simultaneously. From the distance came the strokes of a bell—ding dong—ding dong. Shanks, who had spoken, stood grinning at them good-naturedly, his big ears standing out below his mop of yellow hair like horns of plenty.

“Feeling rested?” he inquired. “You must be. You been sleepin’ a straight twenty-four hours.”

“Yes, thank you,” said Al. “I feel a lot better.”

“So do I,” admitted Harry.

“Well, Spuds says you been sleepin’ long enough,” advised Shanks. The old man’ll be wantin’ to see you bimeby, and you better get out and grub up. He sent word to call you, and when you had et to send you aft.”

"Where's the ship bound for?" asked Harry, as they arose.

"Unknown t' me," said Shanks. "Somewheres t' the n'uth'ard. Don't believe the old man rightly knows, himself. 'Where fortune calls,' as th' Sky Pilot says."

"Maybe to Boston, if we're going north?" suggested Harry.

"Nope. Farther north."

"Portland?"

"Nope. Farther north," and Shanks' grin visibly broadened. "I guess you're new t' the sea and th' trade."

"To Halifax, then?"

"Nope. Farther north. Don't ask me. I don't know where we'll show up at before we get back. A lot of places, I guess, and some queer places, too."

"How'll we get home? Where are we going, anyway? Can't you tell us?" asked Harry, anxiously.

"Won't get home for awhile, none of us," said Shanks. "You're elected for the voyage. Don't ask me where we'll bring up at; I dunno."

"We'll surely touch at some port where we can get off?" suggested Al.

"Oh, yes," grinned Shanks. "We'll make some harbor where you can get off at. You can get off all right, but I guess you won't want to stay off long any place we stop at. I guess you'll want t' stick t' th' vessel mostly. Well, I got t' go now, or Spuds'll be after me. Get ready and I'll fetch th' grub. Better hurry, too."

Al and Harry were hungry, and they helped themselves liberally to the oatmeal porridge, with thinned condensed milk, which was presently set before them.

"Say," said Shanks, as they ate, "you can call me 'Shanks' if you want to. They all call me 'Shanks' aboard ship, because my legs are so long. I don't mind it. Some legs, hey?" and he held one up for inspection.

"But," continued Shanks, leaning over confidentially and whispering, "you better call the cook 'Mr. Spuddington' till you get used to things and feel all right. They all call him 'Spuds' on board but me. You better not try it, either, for a while. He's pretty touchy on

the 'mister,' and if he gets mad at you, he won't do much for you. If he likes you he'll be special nice to you, and give you extras t' eat sometimes. Better ask him questions about his ancestors that come over on the *Mayflower*. He likes t' talk about 'em."

"Thank you for the hint," said Al. "My name is Alfred Knowles, but you can call me 'Al.'"

"And my name is Henry Metford," Harry volunteered, "but everybody calls me 'Harry.'"

"Yes, I know. Spuds said your names were Al-fred and Hen-nerly," grinned Shanks. "I'll call you 'Harry' and 'Al.' It's a dum sight more sociable than 'Hen-nerly' and 'Al-fred,' and 'Hen-nerly' makes me think of hen coops."

"Shanks! Where be you?" came at that moment, in an impatient tone from the vicinity of the galley.

"Golly! There's Spuds callin'. He told me t' hurry," whispered Shanks, starting off on a trot, presently to reappear with a dish of fried salt pork, not thoroughly cooked and

dripping with grease, some warmed-over potatoes, bread and strong coffee.

"There, go to it. I got t' leave you now; Spuds wants me," said Shanks. "Hope you'll make out."

"We'll do very well," said Al, and again Shanks hurried away to assist the impatient Spuds.

"I can't eat that fat pork!" declared Harry, in disgust. "It makes me sick to look at it. I never eat fat!"

"It is a greasy mess," agreed Al. "It's too much for me, too. We'll have to make out with the other things."

"I wonder where this ship is bound for, anyhow?" suggested Harry. "If that long-legged fellow knows he certainly didn't give away any information. I don't believe he does know, for he seemed to try to be decent, and I think if he knew he'd have told us."

"Yes, he's a decent sort of chap," agreed Al, "but I think he knows a good deal more than he's willing to tell. Our folks are going to be terribly worried if they don't hear from us pretty soon. They're worried now, and that

makes me worry. If it weren't for that I wouldn't mind so much. We've certainly made a mess of it."

"Yes, mother'll be crazy. It may be a whole week yet before we can send word home. I wish I had never had a car! I wish I had never seen one!"

"Well, we've got to make the best of it. We've been properly punished for what we did, and I've a hunch we're not through yet. But it's our medicine, and we'll have to take it, whatever the dose may be. I couldn't make out what Shanks was driving at when he said we'd make ports but wouldn't want to leave the ship, unless we're going to some outlandish place, and if we are it may be a month, or even two months, before we get back home."

"That would be awful!" exclaimed Harry, in consternation. "But when we see the Captain he'll run in somewhere and send us home. This is a sailing ship and we can't be far from New Bedford yet, and it won't put him out much. I'll tell him mother will pay him for his trouble, and he'll do it quick enough if he thinks he can make some money out of it."

"I hope so," said Al, uncertainly. "We'll try it, anyhow."

They were finishing their meal in silence when suddenly they were startled by the question:

"How be you this morning, lads? Feelin' better?"

Looking up they discovered the rotund figure of Spuds, his sleeves rolled to the elbows, and his body still enveloped in the great soiled apron.

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Spuddington," answered Al.

"And how be you, Hen-nery? Feelin' better, too?"

"Much better, thank you."

"Hen-nery and Al-fred! I always liked those names. Names of old English kings. Not that I'm inclined to be anything myself but American, but my ancestors came from England in the *Mayflower*, as I told you, and blood is thicker than water, they say. And, natural like, the English come next t' the Americans with me, if we did lick 'em at Bunker Hill and other places."

"We didn't quite lick them at Bunker Hill," corrected Al, "but we would have if our ammunition had held out."

"*Didn't* we! Well, now, but *didn't* we! We licked 'em at plenty of other places, too!" and Spuds swelled with pride at the thought.

"Was it your father's people that came over in the *Mayflower*, Mr. Spuddington?" Al asked, diplomatically, for he realized that he had been upon the verge of an argument as to the results of the Battle of Bunker Hill.

"Yes," said Spuds, "my father's folks. I'll tell you all about it some time, but Captain Mugford wants to see you aft. *Now*, I'd like t' tell you about it," and Spuds' tone was apologetic, "but Captain Mugford'll be mad if you don't report right off. I'll remember to tell you all about it, later. There'll be plenty of chance. Don't be scared of Captain Mugford. He talks loud, but he's all right."

"We won't be afraid of him," assured Harry, as the two ascended to the deck above.

They were still a little weak, and their lips were still cracked and sore as a result of their long thirst. But otherwise they had nearly or

quite recovered from the hardships of their imprisonment. The sky was clear and the day was marvelously beautiful. The sea was calm, and there was scarcely breeze enough to fill the sails. The glorious sunshine and fresh air made their hearts bound with the joy of life.

"Isn't it fine—to be alive!" said Al.

"Yes," Harry agreed, "and yesterday morning—only yesterday morning—we expected that we'd die down there! Won't we have a story to tell when we get back! But," he added, suddenly remembering, "I wonder if the man was much hurt? It seems almost like a dream—our striking him!"

The sailors watched them curiously, and dropped jocular side remarks about stow-aways, as the boys made their way aft. Near the after companionway they met Mr. Dugmore, who greeted them with a solemn face, and stroked his beard meditatively as he looked them over.

"Both of you landsmen," said he, shaking his head dejectedly. "Well, it can't be helped. It can't be helped. You've a hard time ahead of you; a hard time, so to speak. I'll do *my*

best to teach you. Go below; the Captain is there."

Mr. Dugmore's cryptic remark about "a hard time" puzzled them, but they were soon to be enlightened. They descended and stood in the austere and bristling presence of Captain Mugford. The Captain was leaning over a chart spread upon the table, but stood erect and faced them, with a mighty scowl, as they entered.

CHAPTER VI

AN INTERVIEW WITH CAPTAIN MUGFORD

FOR a moment Captain Mugford stood glowering at them silently, and as they believed most fiercely, his great eyebrows drawn in his characteristic, and, it seemed to them, terrible scowl. Then suddenly, in fog-horn tones, he demanded:

"What are you doing on my ship? What are you doing on *my* ship, I say?"

"We—" began Al.

"Pish and fiddlesticks!" Captain Mugford cut him short. "Stowaways! Stowaways! I won't have stowaways on my ship! No, I won't have 'em! What you doing here? How'd you dare to stowaway on my ship?"

"We didn't intend to be stowaways," said Al, "we—"

"Bosh! Bosh!" bellowed Captain Mugford. "Pish and fiddlesticks, I say! Didn't intend! Why don't you answer my question?"

I asked you a question! Why don't you answer it, I say?"

"We'll answer it if you'll give us a chance!" and Al, sensible of injustice, spoke with spirit. "We were in a car and ran out of gas, just outside New Bedford —"

"Pish!" boomed Captain Mugford. "Gas! Don't trifle with me! Don't trifle with me! I want to know *what—brought—you—on—my—ship!*"

"I'm trying to tell you, sir, and I'll be glad to do so if you will permit me," and Al looked Captain Mugford fearlessly in the face. "May I continue, sir?"

"May you continue? May you continue? You impudent young scoundrel!" the Captain bellowed. "I've no time for trifling! Answer my question at once! Don't talk about gas!"

"It was a gasoline runabout, and the engine naturally would not run without gas," Al, nettled, had assumed a dignified tone, "so we were stalled —"

"Gasoline runabout wouldn't run about without gas! I see! I see! Why don't you

go on? Lost your tongue? I'm not interrupting!"

"When the car stalled we walked into New Bedford, and found we had no money with us—"

"Bosh! Fiddlesticks! I don't want to hear about your gas and cars and money! I want to know why you stowed away on my ship! Can't have stowaways on my ship! No, sir! No!"

"We hadn't money to pay for a room in a hotel, and so we walked down on a pier to spend the night," continued Al, deciding to ignore the interruption. "It was cold, and your vessel lay by the dock, and we went aboard—"

"Yes! I see! I see! Went aboard! I know you came aboard, or you wouldn't be here! Of course you came aboard!"

"We came aboard to ask if we might stay on her until morning. There wasn't anybody in sight to ask, so we went down into the hold to keep warm, and went asleep. When we woke up the hold was closed. We didn't want to be stowaways and go to sea."

"Pish!" remarked Captain Mugford, deprecatingly. "I didn't want you on my ship! Didn't ask you to come! Didn't want you! Now you're here, got to do something with you! Terrible nuisance, stowaways! Terrible nuisance!"

"And we don't want to stay on your old scow!" blurted Harry, who had until now remained silent. "Take us back to New Bedford and we'll leave it fast enough."

"Huh! Huh!" ejaculated Captain Mugford.

"Yes," continued Harry, stepping forward and throwing back his shoulders, "a dirty old scow, and we don't want to stay on it!"

"Huh! Huh! Old scow! The *Sea Lion* an old scow! Don't want to stay on it! Guess you'll have to stay awhile, unless you want me to throw you overboard! Yes! Yes! Throw you overboard! Good idea!" For a moment there was the suggestion of a humorous twinkle in Captain Mugford's eyes, but quickly his scowl was more terrifying than ever.

"My mother will pay you well for all the

trouble you may have. She is *Mrs. Brocton Metford*," Harry announced, with pride, "if you want to know—Mrs. Brocton Metford, of Fall River!"

"Pish and fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Captain Mugford. "Mrs. Brocton Metford! Never heard of her! Never heard of her!"

"Anybody that knows any one has heard of Mrs. Brocton Metford," asserted Harry, his nose in the air.

"Huh! Maybe! Maybe! I never heard of her! Never heard of Mrs. Mocton Bedford—"

"Brocton Metford," Harry corrected.

"Never heard of her! Name don't count! Stowaways count now! Won't see New Bedford in two years! Two years!"

"But mother will pay you well for all your trouble!" insisted Harry.

"Don't know her! Don't know her! Wouldn't matter if I did!" Captain Mugford had been looking the boys over critically. "Work'll do you good! Make seamen of you before you get home! Yes, make men of you, too! Don't suppose either of you ever did a

hand's turn! We'll teach you! Do you both good!"

"I *won't* work!" exclaimed Harry. "I won't work for you!"

"Pish and fiddlesticks! Won't work! Guess you will! Yes, guess you will!"

"How long will it be?" asked Al.

"How long? Can't say! Can't say! Two years! Yes, two years if we have good luck!"

"Can't you put us ashore somewhere?" Al suggested.

"Don't touch anywhere! No chance! Glad to be rid of you if I could. Can't do it!"

"You old pirate!" broke in Harry.

"Huh! Huh! Pish! Mr. Jones'll fit you out from the slop chest! Get out of here now! Go forward! See Mr. Jones! Get out, I say! Can't bother with you!"

"I *won't* work!" insisted Harry.

"Pish and fiddlesticks!"

"Where are we going?" asked Al, who now realized the hopelessness of further argument.

"Can't answer questions! North! Going north! Can't waste time now! You'll find out—you'll find out!" and he waved them away.

Shanks was on deck when they ascended, his sleeves rolled up, his head bare, and his mop of yellow hair more prominent than ever.

"What did th' old man say?" he asked. "Was he in bad humor?"

"He's an old pirate!" exclaimed Harry, choking with rage.

"Oh, he ain't so bad when you get used to him," soothed Shanks. "What did he say you was to do?"

"To work," said Al. "And—that we wouldn't go home in two years. It's awful! Our people will be distracted!"

"Oh, two years ain't long. It'll go quick," Shanks comforted.

"Do you know where we're bound for, Shanks?"

"To th' Arctic seas, whalin' and tradin'. I didn't tell you before. I didn't want t' make you feel bad. I don't know what parts we'll head for—just to the Arctic somewhere."

CHAPTER VII

THE MATE'S HARD FIST

AND so it came about that there was no escape for Harry and Al. What God holds in store for us no man knows. He shapes our destinies, and it is well that our vision does not penetrate the future. Harry and Al had set out on a July day for an afternoon of pleasure, and suddenly, without hint or warning, they found themselves common sailors aboard a whaling ship Arctic bound. What fairy's wand could have wrought greater magic?

Mr. Jones fitted them out from the slop chest with appropriate clothing—coarse, but warm. The winds from icefields and icebergs would soon blow cold. To take the place of their lighter garments they were given woolen underwear, woolen socks, jackets and trousers of rough but serviceable cloth, sea boots, oil-skins—everything necessary to a sailor's life aboard ship in northern seas.

And then Mr. Jones casually but caustically

informed them that the more quickly they learned the work the better it would be for them.

"I won't work!" Harry declared.

"Oh, yes, you will," said Mr. Jones, with an intonation that left no doubt he had spoken the last word. Then he curtly commanded them to go below, change to their sea clothes, and report on deck without loss of time.

"Well," remarked Al, as they went below, "I suppose it's our medicine, and we've got to take it."

"It isn't right! It's—it's—terrible!" and there was almost a sob in Harry's voice. "But I won't work, and they can't make me!"

"We'd better take things as they come, and make the best of it," counseled Al.

"I'll put on these clothes, but I *won't* work," declared Harry. "I won't work with these low, ordinary people. My mother wouldn't want me to."

"Oh, it isn't that," said Al. "It's no disgrace to work, and I don't mind working. A little of that won't hurt either of us. What troubles me is not getting home, and the worry they'll

have about us, for nobody knows where we are."

"It is a disgrace to do this kind of work," insisted Harry. "I wouldn't want any of my friends to know I ever did it."

"You don't look natural in the least, Harry," said Al, when they had donned the new clothing. "I'd hardly know you!"

"I don't feel natural, either," Harry declared. "I feel like a lout, and as clumsy as an old cow. But, oh, my! You're a beaut! I wish you could see yourself!"

"We're just plain seamen and workmen now," said Al, dolefully. "And, Harry, we can't enter college this year, after all, or perhaps next."

"No, or maybe never," and with the thought Harry's momentary amusement at Al's uncouth appearance was swept away. "Maybe — we'll never — see home or our people again, either. It's terrible — terrible!"

"We'll see them some time, but two years is a long while, and we don't know what may happen, and don't know much about where we're going," and Al, too, had a decided choke

in his voice. Then he added, bravely. "But I'm going to make the best of it. Things never turn out as bad as we expect."

"I don't know," said Harry, disconsolately.

"Well," cheered Al, "we're in for it. Let's hope it won't be so bad, and we may have some fine adventures and a lot of good sport."

"I've been pinching myself to make sure I'm awake, and not dreaming," Harry declared. "I half believe, yet, I'll wake up at home and find it was just a terrible dream after all."

"I'm afraid it's real enough," said Al.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Harry, twitching his shoulders. "This woolen shirt scratches, and I don't believe I can wear it. That's real enough, anyhow."

"So does mine. Let's go up on deck, and get the air and sunshine," Al suggested.

They avoided the sailors, and taking a position near the mainmast looked away over the endless swell, at the ever-changing waters and glistening wave crests. They felt desolate and forsaken and lonely.

It seemed to them that all the world had suddenly turned topsy-turvy; that home and

dear ones, the old familiar things, hopes and ambitions, had been swept by some mighty hand into the past. Some magic had changed the world and their whole outlook upon life. But a few short days before they had been young gentlemen of leisure. Now they were to be toilers among men, in an adventurous calling, deprived of luxuries and, they had no doubt, of the ordinary comforts of life as they had known life. They were to learn that necessities under some conditions of life are luxuries under another. That the joy of doing—of accomplishing—is one of the greatest pleasures in the world. They were, indeed, to learn many things.

It was incredible to them now, as they stood looking out over the sea, that their imprisonment in the dark hold had lasted but two days, and that but three days had elapsed since their adventure in Harry's runabout. Measured by their suffering and fevered imagination, the time had lengthened almost into weeks.

Their hardships and their immediate predicament caused the experiences of that exciting afternoon to shrink into insignificance, and

they thought of it now as one thinks of a bad dream long after it has been dreamed. In their present misery and anxiety for their own welfare and what the future might hold for them, the injured man was half forgotten.

Mr. Jones was nowhere in sight, and this was a relief. The sailors were idling about the deck, enjoying the warm July sun. The vessel was clean and orderly. The wind was light, and the ship was loafing along in a calm sea.

Harry and Al, however, were anything but happy. Each occupied with his own misery, they stood apart and silent until presently their attention was attracted by a school of porpoises, and they became interested in the antics of the animals playing alongside. They were watching the porpoises when a sailor joined them. He was a sturdy, square-shouldered, well-built man, wearing a short sandy beard sprinkled with gray. There were good-natured wrinkles in the corners of his eyes and the eyes themselves were smiling and pleasant.

"Funny beasts, aren't they?" the sailor remarked after a few moments.

"Yes," said Al. "They seem to be following us."

"Showing off," suggested the sailor. "They act like a lot of boys showing off. Sometimes they keep alongside the vessel for an hour at a time. Funny beasts!"

For a little while they watched the porpoises in silence.

"Is the ship likely to stop anywhere before it reaches the Arctic?" Al presently asked, still hoping, and still unable to realize that some escape was not possible. "I mean somewhere we could leave her and get back home."

"I really don't know, but I hardly think so," answered the sailor. Then, after a pause: "It's a disagreeable fix you've got into, fellows. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped. You'll find it a bit hard at first, but you'll come to like it after awhile. There may be times when you'll feel you need a friend to talk with, and I want you to know I'm your friend. My name is Hiram Hodges. They call me 'Sky Pilot,' because when I'm in port I take part in mission meetings for sailors."

"Thank you," said Al, introducing himself

and Harry. "It's good of you to say you'll be our friend. We're in hard luck—and—I'm afraid we'll need a friend before we get out of it."

"Tell me about it—if you'd like. Tell me how it happened," and the Sky Pilot's voice was full of sympathy and he listened attentively while Al related the story of their misadventure.

"I'm heartily sorry for you both—heartily sorry for you," said the Sky Pilot. "You're going to be homesick, and a good many other things before you're through with it. I take it neither of you has ever done much work?"

"I've never worked, and I don't intend to now!" said Harry, who had held aloof and taken no part in the conversation. "I don't have to work. If the Captain doesn't want me on board he can put in somewhere and I'll leave him. My mother will pay him for the trouble. If the Captain won't do it, and keeps us on the ship, it's his own fault. I *won't* work, and if he thinks I will he'll find he's mistaken."

"I wouldn't say that," soothed the Sky Pilot.

"Everybody has to work on a ship. Every one must do his share. It's sport, when you learn to do things you never knew how to do before, and every time you do anything worth while you feel that you count for something in the world, and a fellow who never does anything himself, but leans on others, is a parasite, like a mosquito, or a flea, or a barnacle. Every man should take pride in doing his part, and not be content to live on what someone else earns."

"Well, why doesn't the Captain put us ashore, then?" Harry persisted.

"The Captain can't run out of his course to put you ashore," the Sky Pilot explained. "One day might mean a good deal on a voyage of this kind, for we're going where the summer is short, and advantage must be taken of every day when we can sail. We might lose a whole week if we turned from our course to make a port now, and that might be enough to lose us half the voyage. The Captain must make a good showing and a good profit for the owners. That's what they pay him for."

"What worries me," Al broke in, "is the

folks at home. They don't know where we are, and they'll think we're dead."

"Yes, that's too bad! Too bad!" agreed the Sky Pilot. "But think how glad they'll be when you do go back to them! I'm of the opinion it may be a good thing for you both, if you've never learned to work. What you learn on this voyage will be a help to you all your life. You'll learn to be self-reliant, and that is a great thing to learn. You'll do better work in college, too, when you do go. College will mean more to you."

"I don't see how it'll help us any to waste two years on an old scow of a schooner," said Harry with bitterness.

"But it will," insisted the Sky Pilot. "The time won't be wasted. And for your own happiness I'll suggest that you take it as one of the hard knocks you're bound to meet with sooner or later in the game of life. Buckle down to it, lads, and now you're in it play the game for all it's worth."

"Thank you," Al acknowledged. "We got ourselves in the mess, and I guess all we can do is to make the best of it."

"That's the thing! Make the best of it, and show the sort of stuff you're made of!" counseled the Sky Pilot as he left them.

"That's good advice," remarked Al, when he and Harry were alone. "We've got to make the best of it, anyhow, and we may as well make up our minds to settle down to the job first as last."

"Well, I'm going to stand for my rights," asserted Harry. "If they won't put us ashore, I'll just be a passenger. That man is just a common seaman. I'm not going to mix with those fellows. They're common and coarse, and my mother wouldn't like to have me."

"Oh, bosh!" exclaimed Al, with some irritation. "He's a decent fellow, and he talked good common sense. You may do as you please, but we're up against hard luck and I'm going to play the game and take what comes."

Harry assumed an injured air and, for a little, neither spoke. Presently Harry remarked:

"I wish I had a cigarette. I haven't had a smoke since we came on the schooner."

"I'm glad you haven't," said Al, "and I

hope you can't get any aboard. If you hadn't smoked your nerves to pieces with cigarettes, you wouldn't have run the man down, and wouldn't have got into this mess."

"Oh, keep still about that! I'm going to smoke if I want to," Harry blurted angrily, and the two were on the point of a quarrel when Mr. Jones suddenly appeared.

"What's your name?" he inquired of Al.

"Alfred Knowles," answered Al.

"'Sir!'" corrected Mr. Jones. "In addressing an officer aboard ship, say 'sir,' and see that you don't forget it. Knowles, go to the cook and get a scrub brush and a bucket of water, and soap and clean up the cabin companion-way."

"Yes, sir," and Alfred, in accordance with his decision to "play the game," promptly went forward to the galley.

"And what's your name?" Mr. Jones asked Harry.

"Henry Metford," answered Harry imperiously and with no attempt to conceal his antagonism.

"You heard what I said to Knowles about

the use of 'sir,'" Mr. Jones spoke in an even, crisp note. "Remember it. You go to the cook for water, soap, and scrub brush, and clean up the fo'cas'le."

"I won't!" blurted Harry. "I won't say 'sir' to such ordinary persons, and I won't do your dirty work for you!"

Harry did not know just how it came about, but a moment later he found himself sitting upon the deck, his brain in a whirl, and a stinging sensation in his face. He raised his hand to wipe away a warm moisture dripping from his nose, and found the moisture to be blood. Glancing up, he discovered Mr. Jones looking grimly down upon him, but as quiet and unperturbed as though nothing unusual had occurred. Immediately his blood boiled with resentment. Angry tears filled his eyes, and, half shouting and half sobbing, "You big brute! I'll show you who I am!" he sprang to his feet and blindly hurled himself at the mate.

This time Harry went sprawling upon the deck, too dazed to rise at once.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FO'CAS'LE

"**B**ILLINGS!" Mr. Jones commanded in the same even voice, "take this stow-away to a bucket of water and have him wash his face, and then see that he scrubs the fo'cas'le down. You may give him a rope end if he objects."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Billings, a sailor who had been observing Harry's mutiny, coming forward with a malicious grin as Mr. Jones went about his business. He was a big man, with high cheek bones and an ugly scar on the left side of his face extending from the corner of his mouth to his ear.

"Git up, and be lively about it!" the sailor commanded.

Harry drew himself painfully to his feet and, still dazed, looked about him.

"There's a bucket of water. Souse your head now, and wash that blood off."

Mechanically Harry obeyed. The cold

water cooled his brain and revived him. He rebelliously dried his face upon a soiled towel which Billings produced. Oh! for some of his mother's clean linen.

"Now come and scrub down the fo'c's'le!" Billings commanded gruffly.

"I won't!" sobbed Harry.

A rope end caught him sharply upon the legs with a stinging cut, and he sprang away, with Billings following.

"I'll — I'll get even with all of you! I'll have you all put in jail when I get home!" Harry declared, as he took a bucket of water, a scrubbing brush and a cake of brown soap from Spuds, while Billings grinned.

"There, there, now, Hen-nery," soothed Spuds, sympathetically. "We all has t' do th' work that's set for us. Don't be excited about it."

Without replying or acknowledging Spuds' offered sympathy, Harry preceded Billings to the fo'c's'le, and under the impetus of the rope end did the required scrubbing very well, though it was, doubtless, the first useful thing he had ever done in his life.

When the two stowaways assembled with the sailors at mess Harry's face bore the marks of its contact with Mr. Jones' hard fist, and he was aware that on his legs were welts raised by the still harder rope end of Billings.

But the greatest laceration and injury was to his pride. He had been compelled to do the work of a servant, and Harry had been reared to look upon servants, upon all, indeed, who labored as far beneath him and upon labor itself as degrading; and therefore he felt that he had been degraded, and much as you and I would feel were we guilty of some dishonorable act, unworthy our manhood. But Harry had much to learn and he was in a fair way to increase his store of wisdom and to readjust his views of life and of men.

Now, as he seated himself at the fo'cas'le table, Harry's heart was filled with bitterness and rebellion. Ordinarily he would have objected to dining with the crew, but a consuming appetite and the knowledge that if he were to eat at all it must be with them, were sufficiently potent considerations to impel him to stifle, though not to forget, his prejudices.

"How'd you make out with the scrubbing?" asked Al, who sat next Harry, but Harry was in a sullen mood and did not answer.

The stowaways were the objects of some good-natured chaffing, but it was an open, jolly sort of chaffing. Harry continued silent in an attempt to ignore it, but Al, with his determination to make the best of things, laughed and gave back the thrusts with interest, and before the meal was ended was on good terms with all the crew save with a silent and sullen Portuguese addressed as Manuel, and with Billings, who was an ill-natured fellow, and, it was plain to be seen, liked by no one.

"I'm sorry you got that drubbing," said Al when he and Harry were alone for a little after dinner. "It was brutal of the mate, but that's what we've got to expect if we don't jump when we're ordered."

"I'll get even with him yet, and with that beast of a sailor they call Billings!" declared Harry sullenly. "You wait and see."

"The best thing to do is to do as we're told," advised Al. "We haven't a chance among

them, and they'll beat us up if we don't obey, and we'll always get the worst of it."

The stowaways were kept busy enough doing such things as inexperienced hands aboard ship can do. When there was no other work to be done Mr. Dugmore took it upon himself to see that they were kept properly employed acquiring a knowledge of seamanship in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Dugmore felt a sense of personal responsibility for the education of the recruits, though he had small faith in their ever becoming useful members of the crew.

"Men have got to be born and bred to the sea to make good sailors," said he. "Leastways bred to it. I'll do the best I can with these stowaways, but the best I do can't be much in one voyage."

It was Mr. Dugmore's habit to look upon the darker side of life. He always expected the worst to happen, and he always lived upon the brink of calamity. He was never happy, indeed, unless he was miserable. But he was a good seaman, and knew how to handle a ship and how to handle men, and so it came about

that for many years he had been second mate of the *Sea Lion*.

It was not long after dinner that he came upon Al and Harry in their first unemployed interval, and, stopping before them, he contemplated them sorrowfully and thoughtfully while he stroked his beard. Presently he inquired:

"Do you stowaways know anything?"

"I—beg your pardon, sir," said Al, taken back by the direct question.

"I asked," repeated Mr. Dugmore, "do you know anything?"

"I hope so," said Al, more amused than offended, for Mr. Dugmore had asked the question as he might have inquired solicitously after their health.

"What do you know?" asked Mr. Dugmore.

"Why—why, we've both prepared for college," Al hesitated, at a loss to understand the scope of the question. "We've studied Latin and French and mathematics—"

"All that won't be of any use here," said Mr. Dugmore, shaking his head dejectedly

and hopelessly, and stroking his beard. "If you don't know anything about seamanship the rest of it won't help."

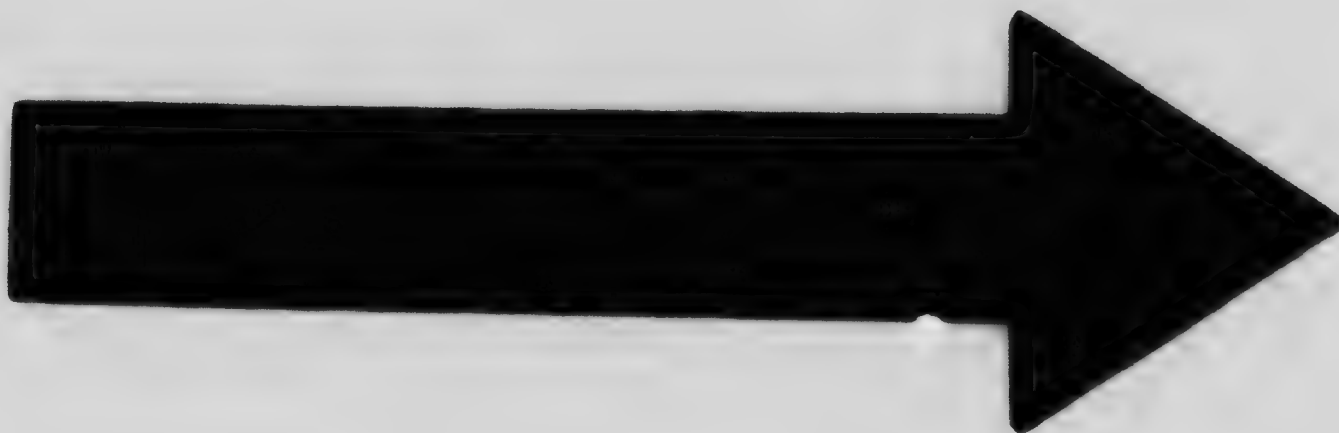
"We know only the ordinary things about sailing," Al volunteered.

"I thought so. I thought so," Mr. Dugmore repeated in the tone of one whose worst fears had been confirmed. "Well, then, you'll have to learn. Joshua, come here!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded a grizzled old seaman, stepping forward.

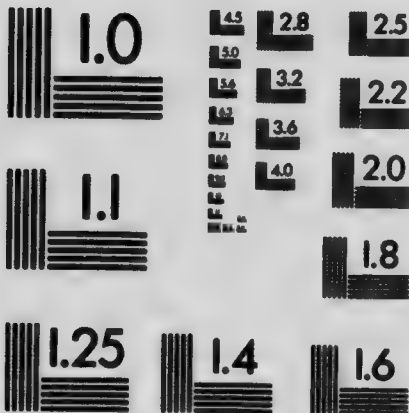
"These stowaways know nothing about seamanship. I'll put them in your hands to instruct. Do the best you can with them," and Mr. Dugmore's voice suggested that he believed the best would not be much.

Joshua Tidd, or "Daddy," as he was called, was by many years the oldest man in the crew. As Harry and Al learned later from Shanks, he was considered a dissipated and more or less worthless character ashore, but aboard ship, where liquor was out of his reach, "as good a sailor as ever reefed a sail." He was a thorough instructor, and incidentally derived no small amount of pleasure and afforded



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considerable amusement to the crew in the course through which he put the stowaways.

He insisted upon their learning the names and uses of every rope and cable, tackle, sail, and gear. When a thing had once been named and its use explained, he would permit no forgetting. It was his custom, when one of his pupils did forget, to grasp the delinquent one by the back of the neck with a big, horny hand, incline the head to an angle which brought the forgotten object within range of vision, and, while he retained his hold on the unfortunate learner, repeat the lesson with jocular amplifications.

Upon the first occasion when Harry was subjected to this treatment, which happened that very afternoon, he rebelled. His dignity was injured. He tried vainly to release himself from the grasp, and when at length Daddy freed him he turned in a white heat upon Daddy and exploded:

“Don’t you dare to lay hands on me again, you old brute!”

Daddy reached for a bucket of water which

stood near, and, dashing the contents into Harry's face, remarked:

"That'll cool you off a bit, lad. 'Tain't good to get overhet."

Harry felt that he stood alone in the world, with every hand against him. He ate his supper that evening in the same sullen silence in which he had eaten dinner. Al was sorry for him. He pitied the spirit that could not accept the inevitable, as he himself had decided to do.

When supper was over and they were free from further duty, they sought a quiet corner where they could sprawl at full length upon the deck and rest while they talked.

"I won't stand it!" Harry burst out when they were alone.

"Oh, Harry, get a grain of sense into your head!" said Al. "What's the use of bucking against the whole crew? I don't like it any better than you, and it's just as hard for me, but I'm going to play the game, now we're in it, for all it's worth, and I'll know something about seamanship and whaling when I go home."

"I don't want to know anything about them,

and if I did I wouldn't learn this way," growled Harry, adding in a choking voice, "I'm not going to be beaten up by these toughs. It's hard enough to have to stay with them and eat with them. They're just a lot of hogs."

"They're certainly not a pink-tea-party crowd," Al grinned; "but, Harry, they're a good sort, and I'm sure they'll turn out to be a good lot when we know them. I didn't have any trouble."

"No, you just went like a baby and did what they told you to do," said Harry bitterly.

"I did what they told me to do because there wasn't anything else to do. I didn't want to get beaten up as you were, because there'd be nothing gained by it, and it'll make it a lot worse for us in the end. You'd better get some sense into your head and do as you're told," Al admonished.

"And that old fellow threw water on me!" Harry complained.

"That was a little tough on you, after the beating you'd had," agreed Al.

"I won't stand it!" exclaimed Harry, his anger renewed at the recollection. "You said

the night we ran the man down you'd stand by me whatever happened, and you're not doing it."

"Oh, come, now!" objected Al. "You know I'll stand by you, but what can *I* do?"

"We can stand together, anyhow!" growled Harry, adding spitefully, "I'll find some way of getting even with them! I'll show them, yet!"

Glancing up, Harry discovered Billings grinning down at them in what was intended to be a friendly manner.

"I heard what you said about gettin' even," he volunteered, "and if you fellers mean it, maybe I can help some. It was tough th' way they handled you."

"You hit me with the rope end!" flared Harry.

"I had to. Th' mate ordered it. If I hadn't done it when th' mate ordered it, he'd have fixed me. Now I've come to have a talk," said Billings, sitting down and dropping into a confidential tone. "You fellers has got it in for 'em, and so have I. Th' morning you fellers was took out of th' hold, th' mate punched me

and threatened to have me put in irons because he said I was startin' mutiny. They can't treat me that way. I'm goin' to get even with 'em. I'm just waitin' for th' chance, and it's comin'! Manuel is with me, and you fellers can be, too, if you want to get in on it. Be you with me? It'll be a chance for you both t' get back home."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Al, suspiciously. "We want to get home, but we'll not be mixed up with anything that isn't straight."

"Oh, it's straight enough, and it'll get you home all right," Billings assured, "and they can't git back at us, either."

"What is it?" asked Harry.

"Tell you that later, if you fellers want t' git home and feel like comin' in with Manuel and me." Billings spoke low and cautiously, glancing around to make certain they were not overheard. "We can't work it right off. We'll have t' wait awhile. It's a sure thing and no chance of a slip-up if we hang together, but it'll take nerve, and you fellers look like you've got nerve. Be you in on it?"

"Yes," agreed Harry, his desire to return

home and escape the misery of his surroundings leading him to forget every other consideration. "You said it was straight, and we'll be with you."

"I knew you fellers had nerve," Billings flattered, adding with a malicious grin. "I'll tell you the plan, and chart th' course for you t' steer when th' time comes. Mum's th' word. Don't say a word about this t' anybody now."

"I don't know about this," said Al. "I want to know what you're going to do."

"I'll tell you *that* time enough," said Billings. "You fellers just keep mum till I talk."

"We won't say anything about it," Harry promised.

"I'll take your word for it," said Billings, rising to his feet, adding as he left them, "And you'd *better* not, either of you. Don't forget *that*."

"I don't like that fellow," said Al when Billings was gone, "and I've a mind to go right to Captain Mugford and tell him what he said."

"And if he's got a way to get us home, spoil it all!" protested Harry. "He said it was

straight, and I gave my word we wouldn't say anything about it."

"But I don't believe it's straight, and you had no right to make any promises for me," said Al, plainly out of patience. "Did you notice the way he said we'd better not tell, and said not to forget *that*? I'm not afraid of him, and I've a mind to tell just because he said that."

"Oh, don't go and give it away now," interposed Harry. "If there's any way to get home I want to go."

"All right, I won't mention it," agreed Al, "but just the same, I'm not satisfied about it."

CHAPTER IX

A DIVE WITH A WHALE

THERE comes the Sky Pilot. Keep still or he'll hear you," Harry cautioned in an undertone, as the Sky Pilot approached.

"Good evening, lads. Taking it easy?" said he cheerfully as he sat down beside them on the deck where they were still lounging.

"Good evening," answered Al. "Yes, we're loafing and resting."

"I'm afraid you haven't found your first day as sailors very pleasant, but you'll fall into it and like it after awhile. Everyone does. There's nothing like the good old sea, when a fellow gets acquainted with her."

"Well, I won't like it while I'm on this ship," asserted Harry spitefully. "It's a prison ship, that's all. Thugs and toughs! I can't stand it, and I won't, either, for very long."

"This was a hard day for you, Metford," the Sky Pilot sympathized. "Things would have gone better if you'd followed my advice."

You fellows are up against it, and the sooner you accept that as a fact, the smoother things will go for you. There's no use trying to butt the whole crew. It's too big a job for one man."

"That's what I've been saying," agreed Al, while Harry dropped into sullen silence.

"I saw Billings over here with you a little while ago," suggested the Sky Pilot. "He seems to be trying to get friendly."

"Yes," answered Al cautiously, "he was here talking with us."

"I hope he just wants to be friendly," said the Sky Pilot. "He and Manuel are a little out of sorts with the rest of us. A day or so after we left port they tried to stir up a mutiny because there were thirteen in the crew. No one would join them. Just thought I'd drop you a word of advice not to get mixed up in anything of that sort. I don't know much about the Portuguese, but Billings has a bad record, and there are some unpleasant stories about things he's done. But, of course, a man's faults are always multiplied, and he may not be so bad as he's painted. I do know, though,

that he was taken on only because men were scarce, and to fill out the crew."

"Thank you," said Al. "I don't like him, and we won't let him get us mixed up in anything."

"He's as good as any of the crew, as far as I can see," Harry broke in hurriedly as a warning to Al not to say too much of Billings' conversation.

"I hope so," said the Sky Pilot.

Whether it was because of Al's arguments, or the Sky Pilot's advice, or a hope that Billings would fulfil his promise, or a natural awakening of his reason and good judgment, Harry arose the following morning in vastly better spirits.

"I'm empty clear to the soles of my feet," Al declared when they went below to breakfast after assisting in scrubbing down the decks.

"I never was so hungry in my life," Harry admitted. "I'm developing a whale of an appetite."

And there was no mincing or quibbling with the food. They were both sure they had never enjoyed a meal as they did that breakfast. And

so it was with every meal that followed, for there is no tonic like the brisk air of the sea, and wholesome labor to build an appetite.

Though he voiced no protest or objection, Harry still did the tasks that were assigned him with distaste. Only time could readjust his viewpoint of life and reconcile him to cheerful compliance with orders and the necessity of doing his part in what he considered a degrading service. There was no open rebellion, however, and as the day advanced a growing friendliness on the part of the crew was apparent.

"Sorry I had to souse you yest'day," said Daddy when later in the day he took Harry and Al in hand for instruction. "But you was gettin' cantankerous, and water's a good thing for coolin' off cantankerousness, and I guess you needed coolin'. There's a 'tarnal lot to remember aboard a vessel, and it's good for you fellers to learn it, and I'm set to learn you. You're both learnin' of it all right, but you'll get hold of it quicker 'n' easier if you let me give it to you my way. I'm a set old dog."

"I was angry — and — a little hasty, I guess," Harry admitted.

"You was that!" laughed Daddy good-naturedly. "Well, I cal'late I'm sorry I had to make you mad. Be we goin' t' be friends?"

"Yes," Harry agreed, though perhaps a little reluctantly.

"And you won't cut up ructions when I feel like takin' hold on you? I'm sot in my way, and that's my way of learnin' folks."

"No, you may do it if you want to," Harry agreed.

"Then let's shake hands on't," and Daddy offered a great horny fist, which Harry accepted.

There is nothing like the salt sea air and God's blessed sunshine to clear the brain and revive the spirits. There is nothing like the deep, blue, changeless, but ever changing, sea to inspire ambition. The very vastness of the ocean widens one's view of life, and impresses upon one the boundless possibilities of existence. Its restless waves and throbbing swell, like the great arms and mighty heaving heart of an all-powerful creature, inspire energy, and no red-blooded man can long live upon the sea without imbibing the desire to do great

deeds and to exert the power within himself.

And so it was with Harry and Al. The aching muscles and joints of the first days of unaccustomed toil were forgotten as their bodies became attuned to the exercise and the blistered palms became tough and hard. Even Harry discovered that the sailors were "not such a bad lot after all."

The boys ate and slept as never before in their lives. There had been a day or two when they were miserably seasick, but the motion of the vessel no longer disturbed them and they were growing to like the sea, as most men do upon close association with it. Deep down, too, in their hearts was a consciousness that they were playing the part of men.

From the very beginning Al accepted and treated Shanks with a spirit of comradeship, and as the days passed Harry, too, dropped his early patronizing attitude, which Shanks had never noticed in the least, and the three became excellent friends.

"You fellers are gettin' your sea legs, I guess," Shanks remarked one day when they

were a fortnight out of New Bedford. "At first you wouldn't either of you eat fat pork, but I notice you're stowin' away your share of it now. Don't feel squeamish in your insides any more, I guess?"

"I never ate so in my life!" exclaimed Harry. "I'm hungry all the time. If I wasn't afraid of Spuds, I'd raid the galley some day."

"And neither of us would eat the grub we get here if we were home," said Al. "We'd turn our noses up at it and say it wasn't fit to eat. But here it's bang up!"

"Yep," grinned Shanks, "that's the way I was when I left home for my first voyage three years ago. When a feller's hungry, most anything tastes good. I eat like a hoss."

Presently icebergs loomed on the horizon, and sometimes the *Sea Lion* ran so close to them that their prismatic blues and greens flashed in the sunlight with wondrous and marvelous beauty.

Then came stray bits of ice, and presently large pans, and in the distance to the westward a great white patch appeared on the surface of the sea, reaching away till it touched the hori-

zon, and on bright, sunshiny days every far-away ice pan seemed to stand high above the water. Al and Harry were marveling at the phenomenon one day when Shanks, who had evaded Spuds and joined them on deck for a moment's chat, remarked:

"That's the loom. When we get where we see land most every shore'll seem to rise up into a cliff, when the sun's shinin'. Sometimes I've seen an island stuck right up on top of another, kind of balancin' up on the top. It's curious, like a ghost island. It made me feel funny when I saw it first. I was just a youngster then, and I thought it was some sort of ha'nt. But I'm eighteen now, and of course I got used to seein' the loom."

"What makes the loom?" asked Harry.

"Jiminy! I dunno," said Shanks. "But you see it all through the North."

"It's the same as a mirage, isn't it?" suggested Al.

"Maybe. I dunno," repeated Shanks. "I dunno what a mirage is."

"Why, I remember studying about it in physics," Al explained. "It's a reflection

caused by layers of air, some layers being heavy and dense, and some being light and thin."

"I guess that's it; I dunno," Shanks grinned. "I didn't know some air was thinner than other air. I thought air out in the open was mostly alike."

At that moment Spuds appeared from the galley, looking warm and cross. With a forefinger he wiped the perspiration from his high forehead, swished the moisture to the deck, and looking aft, glimpsed Shanks.

"Well, there you be, you Shanks!" he exclaimed. "And I been callin' you the last ten minutes! What good be you to me, anyway, runnin' off just dinner time! Get down in the galley now, quicker'n a wink, or I'll show you how! If you don't 'tend to your work better I'll ask to have Hen-nery or Al-fred help me."

Contritely enough Shanks slipped down into the galley, with the irritated Spuds close at his heels, and scolding all the way. But there was to be no dinner for them that day. Hardly had Spuds and Shanks gone below when there came a cry from the lookout, perched in the barrel on the foremast:

"Th-ere she blows! T-h-e-r-e she blows!"

Everything was activity at once. Captain Mugford rushed on deck, bellowing orders. The vessel's prow was turned in the direction indicated by the lookout, and it was not long before a spurt of water in the far northeast could be seen from the deck, indicating the position of the whale.

Two boats were at once made ready to be launched at the proper time. Captain Mugford, roaring down the deck, ordered Al to fall in with the crew of boat number one, and Harry with boat number two. Harpoons and lines were arranged carefully in position, and all hands, filled with excitement and anticipation, stood ready at their quarters.

Presently water spouted again, much nearer, and again the shout went up from the lookout:

"There she blows! There she blows!"

The whale was heading toward the ship, and at length two small islands suddenly appeared on the surface of the sea, and not above a quarter of a mile distant. One of these islands was the head, the other the back, of the great



"Th-ere she blows! T-h-e-r-e she blows!"

animal. It was now so close that its hoarse breathing could be easily heard.

"Lower away!" roared Captain Mugford.

Tackles rattled, the boats dropped into the sea, and Al and Harry, quite carried away with excitement, scrambled over the side each into the boat to which he had been assigned, Al with Mr. Jones, who commanded boat number one, and Harry with Mr. Dugmore, in boat number two.

"Pull, you lubbers! Pull!" shouted the officers, and the men pulled as though their lives depended upon it, and Al and Harry bent to the work with as much vigor and interest as they would have put into a 'varsity boat race.

Each boat was armed with a harpoon gun mounted in the bow, and with a supply of hand harpoons and lances. The Sky Pilot was harpoonman in Mr. Jones' boat, and Joshua Tidd, or Daddy, in Mr. Dugmore's. The Sky Pilot and Daddy were stationed at their guns, making ready for the appearance of the whale. Mr. Jones and Mr. Dugmore, each at the stern of his boat, steered with a long oar and directed the men. Including Al and Harry, there were

four men at the oars in each boat, Blackmore, the cooper, having a place in Mr. Dugmore's crew to complete the number.

Four men, besides Spuds and Shanks, remained aboard the *Sea Lion*, it should be explained, that Captain Mugford might have a sufficient crew to maneuver and handle the vessel.

For several minutes the whale lay on the surface of the sea while the boats spread apart to intercept its next move. Then water spouted into the air, and slowly the great hulk sank from view.

The men in the boats waited now in feverish anticipation. It would rise presently, and near the boats. Which boat? every man was asking himself. It might even rise under one of them and pitch all hands into the sea. And so, alert, eager, anxious, they seemed to be holding their breath as they waited.

Five minutes — eight minutes — ten minutes, and suddenly the ponderous body rose, not a dozen feet from Mr. Jones' boat.

No word was spoken. The faces of the men were set and tense. Mr. Jones gave a deft

sweep of the steering oar and the boat swung prow toward the whale. The Sky Pilot was ready at his gun.

"Bang!" came a deafening roar.

"A fall! A fall!" went up from every throat.

The men were now in a frenzy of excitement. The fight was begun. A few seconds the whale hesitated. Mr. Jones ordered the boat to draw in. The Sky Pilot, cool and unperturbed, seized a hand harpoon and, as the boat approached the whale, plunged the harpoon deep into the animal's body. He was so close now that he could almost have touched it with his hand.

Down went the whale—down—down—down—so fast that the harpoon lines paying out over the gunwale made the wood smoke. Away went the whale to the westward, with the boat fast to the harpoon line skimming along in its wake, and the men in the other boat pulling after it with all their strength.

Harry, in the second boat, could not see what had occurred, but the wild shouts from the crew that had made fast to the whale left no

doubt that something important was happening, and he pulled at his oar with a strength he did not know he owned. Even Mr. Dugmore was so eager and excited that he quite forgot his habitual solemnity. He stood now in the stern, one hand on the steering oar, gesticulating wildly with the other, and bellowing at the top of his lungs:

"Pull, you lubbers! Pull! O-o-h, pull! Y-o-u lubbers, pull! Pull! Pull!"

The whale made a sharp turn and suddenly reappeared so close to Mr. Dugmore's boat as to barely escape capsizing it. A sweep of the oars, the boat was in position, Daddy's gun boomed, and another harpoon was placed in its great body.

Already Mr. Jones' boat was close in, and the Sky Pilot, alert and ready, placed a second hand harpoon.

"Straighten that line!" called Mr. Jones, observing a kink in the line directly inside the gunwale.

Al, who was sitting in the forward seat and had partly turned to watch the effect of the harpoon, leaned over and seized the kinked

line. At that moment the whale made a sudden and mighty dive, the line flew up, wrapped itself in a half-turn around Al's arm; he was dragged overboard, and in an instant had disappeared with the whale into the depths of the sea.

CHAPTER X

THE PIRATES' OATH OF SECRECY

THERE was a roar of rushing water in Al's ears and a sense of terrible pressure. He struggled desperately with the harpoon line which held his arm, but suddenly it slackened, his arm slipped out of the loop, and he was free. Al was a good swimmer, but now he was hampered by heavy clothing, and it seemed to him that his lungs would burst before he at length raised his head above the surface of the water and took a long, deep breath.

The sea was calm, fortunately, and, looking about him, he quickly discovered the boat, which had let loose the harpoon lines the moment he was drawn overboard, thus permitting him to free himself, and was now lying to, waiting for him to rise. The moment he had regained his breath sufficiently, Al shouted, and the Sky Pilot and Mr. Jones, who were on their feet looking sharply for his appearance, heard him, and a few minutes later he was

hauled aboard, shivering with his icy bath.

Mr. Jones was ill-humored at what he considered the clumsiness of a landsman, and vexed that he had been compelled to cut loose from the whale. To the men it was all in a day's work. Whalers are used to hard knocks, and Al was learning to accept without complaint what came to him, and he was glad to resume his seat and his oar, and welcomed the hard rowing that followed in an effort to overtake the other boat and the whale.

Fifteen minutes elapsed before the great creature again came to the surface. Mr. Dugmore's boat had already closed in upon it, and Daddy was mercilessly attacking with a long lance when the excited crew of Mr. Jones' boat came into position and the Sky Pilot placed another harpoon.

Suddenly there came the command:

"Back, all!"

The boats backed water, and none too soon to escape the mighty lashings of the great tail of the infuriated and suffering beast.

Down again went the whale, and away went

the boats, but not so far now, for the wounds of lances and harpoons were having their effect. In a much shorter time than on the former occasions the whale reappeared, and now he was rolling about and lashing the sea so furiously that the boats were compelled to keep at a distance.

The Sky Pilot, however, had expected and anticipated this emergency, and while the boat was speeding through the water, had charged his harpoon gun with a rocket, in the head of which was a heavy charge of powder, and running the length of its long shaft a protected fuse. The boat was swung into position, the Sky Pilot took careful aim and fired. It was a good shot. The rocket was planted well into the body and exploded.

The whale lashed about with renewed fury, but the water that it spouted now was red with blood. Presently the convulsions quieted. The boats drew close, and again lances were applied. The whale's breathing became labored, there was a quiver of the great body, and the noble animal was dead.

It was now necessary to tow the carcass to

the *Sea Lion*. It lay on its back, a fluke spread limply out on either side. A hole was cut in each of the flukes, a rope passed through them and tightened until the flukes were drawn up and fastened across the breast. The vast quantity of oil, or blubber, which the whale contained kept it afloat, and harpoon lines were now cut loose. One end of a rope was secured to the tail, the other to one of the boats. A line was passed from the bow of this boat to the stern of the other, and, rowing in tandem, the hunters towed their prize, after a hard, tedious pull, alongside the schooner.

"Good!" exclaimed Captain Mugford. "Good! A right whale, too! Small one, though. Small one! Make her fast now, lads. Make her fast!"

The head was fastened aft, the tail forward, on the starboard side of the schooner, and all hands went aboard for a belated dinner, for five hours had been spent in the capture.

"Oh, but I was frightened when I saw you go overboard!" confided Harry when he and Al had clambered to the deck.

"I didn't have time to be scared, it all happened so suddenly," said Al. "I thought I was done for, though, when I felt myself going down with the whale, but I didn't have time to really get scared."

"It's been the most exciting day I ever had!" declared Harry. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world!"

"Neither would I," agreed Al. "It almost pays for what we've been through."

"I—I don't know but it does," admitted Harry. "Anyhow, it has been a great day."

The work of flensing the whale began directly after dinner. The body lay upon its back, and a tackle, which the whalers called the nose tackle, was made fast to the lower jaw. Thus the great mouth was drawn open and tongue and whalebone removed.

It is from the mouth of the "right" whale that the valuable whalebone is obtained. This bone is attached to the upper jaw. On either side of the jaw are three hundred blades, each from eight to twelve inches wide at the bottom where it enters the gum, and tapering gradually to the tip or outer end. The outer edge of

the blades is smooth, but the inner edge, that is to say, the edge toward the mouth, fringed or frayed. The bone is about a quarter of an inch thick. Its length depends upon the size of the whale. This was a small whale and the longest blade measured a little more than eight feet, and the whalers therefore spoke of it as an "eight-foot whale."

They called the operation of removing the bone and blubber "flensing the whale," and the boys found flensing an oily, dirty job, and anything but agreeable work. With spikes on their boots they went down with the crew upon the carcass. There the great strips of blubber were cut loose and hoisted upon deck with a tackle.

Petrels were already about the carcass in a great flock, and immediately flensing began they proceeded to gorge themselves upon the fat until they were actually intoxicated from overeating and were unable to fly. In this condition the gluttonous birds permitted themselves to float away upon the tide. Or, if they were unable because of their condition to reach the water, they stumbled around among the

feet of the men. The moment a petrel began to recover, however, back he was again at the blubber.

It was back-breaking work, and repulsive enough to Al and Harry, and when, at seven o'clock that night, the last of the blubber was hoisted aboard and the carcass was cut loose and permitted to sink, they had well-blistered hands, and when they tumbled into their bunks they were more tired than ever before in their lives. But they had the satisfaction of feeling that they had done men's work, and could boast now that they were real whalers.

"The fellows will all be going to college in the fall except us," remarked Harry with some bitterness, as he and Al sat alone in a secluded corner of the deck one evening a week after the whale hunt.

"Yes," said Al regretfully, "all except us, and it makes me feel desperate, sometimes, when — when I think of our folks at home and how they're worried."

"The Captain might have put in somewhere and put us ashore," snapped Harry, who was in a rebellious mood. "We weren't far out,

and he could have done it. He kept us to fill out his crew. I've been thinking a lot about mother today. I hope she won't make herself sick worrying. I suppose she thinks I've been kidnaped or something, and that's about what it amounts to. We were kidnaped."

"They call it 'shanghaied.' But we weren't shanghaied, for we came aboard ourselves," corrected Al. "It's just as bad for the folks at home, though, whatever it's called. I'd swallow the disappointment about college and all that and wouldn't grumble about it, if it wasn't for them. So far as you and I are concerned, Harry, we deserve all that's coming to us. It's our medicine, and I suppose we'll have to take it."

At this moment Billings strolled up.

"Evenin'," said he.

"Evening," said Al, who had come to believe that, after all, he might have misinterpreted what Billings had said to them at the time of their conversation. And Billings had on one or two occasions of late relieved him and Harry of difficult tasks in an evident endeavor to show a kindly spirit.

"Feelin' like you want t' go home?" asked Billings.

"Of course we'd like to go home," answered Al. "We're getting better used to the ship, though, and it isn't so bad."

"Wait till we get in th' ice, and th' Arctic winter, before decidin' that," cautioned Billings. "Th' work and th' hard times ain't come yet, but they're about due to arrive, and two winters of it."

"It's a fearfully long time to look forward to," remarked Al.

"Did either of you fellers say anything about what I said to you before?" asked Billings.

"No," said Al.

"I knew you didn't," grinned Billings. "I'd have heard from it if you had. I just said it to try you out."

"Well, we didn't say anything," said Al, completely off his guard, and of the opinion that he had indeed misinterpreted what Billings said, and that nothing serious had been contemplated.

"You fellers won't have t' stay. You can

get home this fall if you stand with me," suggested Billings.

"We certainly don't want to stay if there's any way to get home," said Harry eagerly.

Billings looked cautiously about to see that no one was within hearing.

"Can you fellers keep a secret?" he asked in an undertone.

"I think so," said Al.

"That ain't a square answer," Billings objected. "Can you keep it?"

"Yes," answered Al.

"And you, too?" turning to Harry.

"Yes," agreed Harry.

"Will you take an oath t' keep it?"

Neither could see reason to object.

"Do you swear to God you'll keep it?"

"Yes," said Al.

"That won't do. Say it after me that you swear to God," he insisted. "If you keep it, it won't hurt you."

"I swear to God I'll keep it," Al repeated.

"You, too," turning to Harry.

"I swear to God."

"And I swear to God I'll choke you both if

you ever breathe a word to any one." Billings' attitude had suddenly changed, and as he leaned toward them menacingly, the ugly scar on his face seemed to the boys to grow livid, and his face savage, and instinctively they shrank from him.

"You fellers," continued Billings, "said you wanted t' get even, and I'm takin' you at your word, because I need your help and I can help you. Manuel, the Portuguese, is with us, and the four of us can work things all right if we stick together."

"What will we have to do?" asked Harry, his voice to some degree reflecting the repulsion he felt.

"It's this way," explained Billings, who still spoke in an undertone and watched carefully that he might be quite certain not to be overheard. "There's always four men left aboard when the boats put out after a whale. I heard th' old man tell th' mate you two fellers was to be left aboard after this because you wasn't much good in th' boats, but could help handle th' vessel all right.

"That's when our chance comes. Manuel

and me'll fix it so we'll be th' other two. Then there won't be any one aboard but us four, th' cook and his boy Shanks, and th' old man.

"When th' boats get well away Manuel and me'll jump th' old man, and tie him up. Spuds and Shanks won't have any fight in 'em, and we'll make 'em turn to and help get th' vessel under way, and we'll turn back and make for a Portuguese port Manuel and me knows about, wh' e we can sell th' oil and stuff on board. Manuel can navigate. We'll divide the money with you fellers for helpin' us and you can get a passenger ship home."

"Do—do you mean to send the men adrift?" asked Al, unable to believe that he had not mistaken Billings' meaning.

"Oh, we'll turn th' old man and the other two adrift in a boat time enough so they won't get around t' make any trouble," Billings grinned diabolically, misunderstanding Al's question. "If anything comes up we can say that the rest of th' crew besides us fellers was lost in a fog, and we couldn't find 'em. You fellers needn't be afraid; I'll fix that, all right."

"I didn't mean that," Al corrected in a strained voice. "I mean what would become of the men."

"Oh, that!" and Billings was plainly amused. "They'll fish or cut bait. If they work for it they'll reach shore somewheres and find a pleasant home among th' Eskimos. If they don't they'll make fine eating for the fish."

"Well, I'm going right to the Captain and tell him the whole scheme, and all you've said," declared Al, angrily, as he and Harry sprang to their feet aghast and horrified at the thing proposed and at the man himself. "It's piracy and murder!"

"So will I!" said Harry, excitedly, no less moved by the revelation than was Al. "You—you—"

"Hold on," broke in Billings, his ugly, scarred face livid with anger. "If either of you fellers say a word about this you'll never get home and neither will some of the crew, and likely none of 'em. Don't think Manuel and me are fools. We talked that over and we're ready for trouble. The minute we see a move we'll start things goin'. You understand

what that means. And what's more, when the time comes you two will be with us. You swore you'd keep it secret and I let you in on it. Now I swear you've *got* to keep it quiet and come in on it, or you'll never peep again. Do you understand?"

With white, drawn faces Al and Harry stood looking at Billings as they might have looked at a ferocious beast, unchained and prepared to spring upon them.

"I'll leave you to think it over," said Billings, adding menacingly before he walked away, "Don't forget Manuel and me are ready for trouble. We've looked out for that ahead."

CHAPTER XI

AN HOUR OF SUSPENSE

AL AND Harry looked at each other in horror and astonishment. Billings' proposition had come to them unexpectedly, and just at a time when they were beginning to like the fellow. They had read of such men in old-time stories of pirates and buccaneers. They were good enough villains for those wild tales of fiction, but the boys perhaps had never thought of them as flesh and blood men existing in their own world.

"It's — it's piracy!" exclaimed Al. "Do you realize what he means to do? Steal the ship and cargo, and send the men adrift!"

"What can we do about it?" asked Harry. "There's one thing sure. We've got to save the ship some way."

"I think the best thing to do," said Al, bluntly, "is to go straight to Captain Mugford with the whole story, and let him deal with Billings and Manuel."

"Billings said they were ready for trouble," Harry objected. "They're desperate fellows, and there's no telling what they might do. They'll watch us now, and if they see us go aft to the cabin, or speak to the Captain, they'll know what is up."

"Billings is just a big bluff," said Al, impatiently. "He thought we were a couple of young fools, and that we'd jump at any chance, even piracy, to get home. When he found we wouldn't, he made that threat to scare us. If we'd go in with him it would be easy enough for him to work his plan, but now he finds we won't, he's scared, and he's just bluffing us to keep us quiet."

"He knows if we tell it'll be all up with him and Manuel," protested Harry. "He isn't bluffing. He's just what he looks—a desperado. Besides, we made an oath not to tell."

"I don't believe I'm bound to keep an oath to take part in piracy," said Al. "Anyhow, right or wrong, we mustn't keep it."

"Of course we mustn't let them do it," agreed Harry, "but they won't do anything until there's another whale chase, and let's not

say anything just yet anyhow, and take time to think up something to do."

And so it came to pass that they kept their secret still, but their life now was most unhappy. They felt like participants in the plot. Billings and Manuel, too, dropped threatening words to them on the side upon every occasion, and kept their imagination alive. There was no forgetting, and they felt like men walking upon a mine likely to explode at any moment. They lived in constant dread of the lookout's call "There she blows," for when that came they knew the hour would have arrived for them to act.

But day after day passed and no whales were sighted. More numerous became the icebergs as the *Sea Lion* sailed into higher latitudes. The days were lengthening, and finally there came a time when the sun did not set, and day was continuous. The *Sea Lion* was at last north of the Arctic Circle.

One day the white peaks of Greenland rose out of the sea, and presently the great island, grim, desolate, and silent, lay before them. Northward the *Sea Lion* sailed along the

black, sullen coast, until, one fine morning, she turned her prow into Westenholme Sound, came to, and blew her fog horn lustily.

"I wonder what's up?" said Harry. "It isn't possible that any one lives on those bare rocks!"

Then, as though to answer his question, a boat appeared, and pointed toward the ship. As the boat approached it was seen to be manned by fur-clad, dark-faced savages which were quickly recognized as Eskimos, and as they clambered aboard a little later the stowaways observed them with keen interest.

There were a half-dozen of them—short, stockily built men. They were bare-headed, and their coarse black hair hung to their shoulders. Their clothing was of skin, and of a peculiar cut. The upper garment, drawn over the head like a shirt, had a hood attached, which now lay back upon the shoulders; their trousers were of polar bear skin, the fur oily and dirty; and the boots, which were, indeed, knee-high moccasins, were of dressed seal skin.

The round, dark, shiny faces of the Eskimos were smiling and good-natured, as they talked

in a weird, strange tongue to Captain Muford, Joshua Tidd, Mr. Jones, Mr. Dugmore, the Sky Pilot and some others of the sailors, whom they seemed to know from previous visits.

But Joshua Tidd and the Sky Pilot could understand them better than the others, and with their assistance as interpreters it was arranged that an old Eskimo of the party should pilot the vessel into the harbor and to an anchorage near the Eskimo village, where she could lie safely at anchor while trading was done with the people.

It was a marvelous experience for our young travelers—this first meeting with these wild, primitive hunters of the North. They were glad to be there. The thrill of adventure which they had felt when taking part in the whale hunt was intensified by this personal contact with these strange people.

Had they been transported to another planet their surroundings could not have impressed them as more mysterious and wonderful; not alone the people, but the grim reality, also, of the naked, primordial land itself. The open

sea behind them was dotted with mighty icebergs glinting white in the July sunlight; the majestic grandeur of the scenery as they sailed slowly into the harbor was impressive. Somber and cold as the rocky shores were, they possessed a unique beauty, and above all, they breathed romance and endeavor and attainment.

The waters everywhere were dotted with gulls, terns, looms, sea pigeons, and ducks. The islands and shores were the breeding places of waterfowl, and the land seemed alive with them flying hither and thither over the cliffs. On a vagrant ice pan two great walrus lay asleep, sunning themselves, and here and there seals rose to look curiously at the strange craft that intruded upon their solitude.

"Spuds says I can go ashore," Shanks announced, emerging from the galley and joining Al and Harry on deck. "Be you fellers going?"

"Yes," said Harry, "of course we are."

"Any one say you could?" asked Shanks.

"Why, no, we haven't spoken of it to any one," answered Harry.

"Do we have to ask some one?" inquired

Al. "I thought every one could go ashore when we anchored."

"Maybe you can, if nobody sees you going, but there's no tellin' what might happen after you got back," and Shanks grinned. "It's dead sure something would happen, though. Better ask the mate."

And so, duly warned, they asked permission of Mr. Jones, which he readily granted, and in due time, when the *Sea Lion* anchored and a boat was launched, they were given a place at the oars with the seamen, one of whom was Billings, who seemed determined never to lose sight of them.

It was a wild, weird looking group of fur-clad men, women, and children, which gathered to welcome the sailors. They gazed curiously at the *kablunoks*, as they call the white men, who were doubtless as strange and curious creatures in their eyes as were they in the eyes of the visitors.

Primitive and uncouth as they appeared, the Eskimos were good-natured savages. They laughed, their round, fat cheeks shiny with oil, and beamed a genial welcome when the crew

from the boat stepped ashore, and there was a general handshaking. And not the least interesting were dark little baby faces which peered at the strangers with eyes filled with wonder, from resting places in great hoods on their mothers' backs.

"Let's look around and see what there is to see," suggested Shanks. "I don't reckon we'll stay ashore long. I've been here before, and I know what it's like, but you want to see. It's new to you. Let's look in the tents while they're doin' th' tradin'. There ain't much but smell to 'em, but you'll have to see 'em."

Big, wolfish dogs skulked everywhere, and seemed to disapprove of the visitors, but Shanks asserted they would not hurt any one "if they didn't get a good chance."

The village, which consisted of several round skin tents, was situated upon a flat-topped knoll a little way from the rocky shore. These tents were anchored down with boulders, and were now deserted save by two or three old men and women, who guarded them from the dogs, for every one else had gone to greet the visitors.

"Pretty smelly places to live," remarked Shanks, as they took a peek into one of the tents.

"I should say so!" exclaimed Harry, turning away with a disgusted look on his face. "My, but they're filthy!"

"Yep, seem so to us," said Shanks, "but they couldn't help it if they wanted to, which I don't suppose they do. All the water they have most of the year is ice they melt over a little stone lamp. I don't believe there's one of 'em ever had a bath in his life, and I don't believe they care. I don't suppose they'd give a fair-sized doodle bug for a chance to bathe. Bathin' is sure furrin' to their instincts."

"But I should think it would make them sick to live that way all the time," Al suggested, as they passed on after inspecting more of the tents.

"Nope. It don't make 'em sick. They thrive on it," said Shanks. "Most of the smell comes from walrus and seal meat that's gone bad. They like it that way. Gives it a flavor, I reckon, and they eat most of the meat raw."

And so nearly two hours were spent round about the village, until Daddy blew his whistle

to call the men back to the boat. The trading was finished, and Mr. Dugmore, who had charge of the boat, was anxious to return to the *Sea Lion*, for the summer in the North is short and there was no time to be lost.

And so they visited other Eskimo villages, each a counterpart of the first, trading for pelts of the blue fox, polar bear, and the ivory tusks of the narwhal and walrus, until the people and villages and the land itself became in the end quite commonplace, as all things will in time.

Sometimes the *Sea Lion* battled in storm and wind as she picked her way through the ice floes, and once or twice monster icebergs lost their balance, and turned upon their sides with rumbling, thunderous roar.

The stowaways were becoming accustomed if not reconciled to their lots. Even Harry was learning to adapt himself to the rough companionship of the sailors; and he had decided that they were not so bad, after all.

Whales were scarce. Daddy was constantly complaining of the scarcity, and recalling the "good old days" when he was young and whales

were plenty, when "a whale was a whaler, and kept to his business o' huntin' whales, instead o' putterin' with th' huskies, tradin' for knickknacks o' fur and ivory."

But one day there came again from the lookout the cry, "There she blows!" and again Captain Mugford was bellowing orders, and the men were in a tremendous state of excitement as they ran to quarters and made ready the boats to lower away.

Billings was the lookout that day, and therefore one of the four to stay aboard ship. Al and Harry were not detailed to make up the crew of either of the boats, and when Manuel complained of illness he was ordered to relieve the man at the wheel, who in turn was directed to take Manuel's place in the boat crew. The lads knew that the hour they had so long dreaded had come. Manuel brushed past them, and as he passed muttered in an undertone:

"Bimeby now, soon, be ready."

The boys felt suddenly and unnaturally weak. What Billings and Manuel had planned to do they could not guess, but something desperate, they were certain.

CHAPTER XII

BILLINGS' THREAT

“WE MUSTN'T let the boats go out!” said Al, in a strained voice, when Manuel was out of hearing. “I’m going to warn the mate now—whatever happens.”

With the determination, Al’s fears for results were forgotten, and as he stepped resolutely forward to Mr. Jones he was strong and self-possessed again.

“Mr. Jones, sir, may I have a word with you?” said Al, with suppressed excitement.

“No, get to your place!” ordered Mr. Jones, crisply.

“But—” Al attempted.

“Get to your place!” Mr. Jones snapped.

“I must tell you—” Al began again.

“Get to that halyard and stand by!” roared Mr. Jones.

A cold perspiration broke out upon Al’s forehead as he obeyed the order. He had waited too long. Mr. Jones would not listen

at this busy time. What would happen now? he asked himself.

F've — ten — twenty minutes passed, but the whale, reported by Billings as far away when it had spouted, did not reappear, and to the vast relief of both Al and Harry the boats were stowed again. The narrow escape, however, had made it plain to Al that further delay in revealing the conspiracy was dangerous, and the moment order had been restored on deck and routine resumed he declared to Harry that he was going immediately to Captain Mugford and make a clean breast of it.

"Don't! Don't do it yet!" pleaded Harry in sudden panic. "There may not be any more whales, and if you tell there's no knowing what Billings and Manuel may do!"

"Come on!" insisted Al. "We'll go together. We've waited too long already."

"No! I'm — I'm afraid!" confessed Harry.

"Oh, be a man, and have some backbone!" Al blurted impatiently. "I'm going alone if you don't come with me! I'm going anyhow, and now. There won't be a better chance. Billings is aloft in the barrel and Manuel

at the wheel, and we've got 'em separated. Coming?"

"Y-e-s," consented Harry, reluctantly, his face gone pale. "If—if *you're* going."

"Come on then," and Al strode aft, with Harry following, and to the cabin.

Captain Mugford was busy with his log, and grunted impatiently at the interruption.

"Captain Mugford, sir," Al began boldly, "there's a plot on foot to steal this vessel, and we've come to tell you of it."

"A plot! A plot to steal this vessel!" exploded Captain Mugford, his moustache bristling. "A plot! What do you mean? What do you mean?"

Al proceeded at once to relate the whole story of Billings' plan, while Captain Mugford interrupted with explosive interjections.

"Why didn't you tell me of this before? Why didn't you tell me?" demanded the Captain.

"Because Billings said he and Manuel would make trouble and threatened us, and said they were ready to fight the whole crew,"

explained Al. "We thought there might not be any more whales, and we were hoping Billings wouldn't get any chance, but today when the boats nearly got away we saw we had made a mistake."

"Call Mr. Jones here! Call Mr. Jones!" ordered Captain Mugford. "Be spry now! Call Mr. Jones, I say!"

"Aye, sir!" answered Al, hurrying away, while Harry, fearful of what might happen, stood irresolutely watching Captain Mugford pace up and down the narrow cabin, as angry as ever a bull could be with a red rag waved before its eyes.

In a moment Mr. Jones, with Al in his wake, came hurrying down the companionway stairs, and the instant he appeared Captain Mugford bellowed:

"What does this mean, sir? Mutiny on my ship! Mutiny, sir! Do you hear that? Under your very nose, sir! What do you mean, sir, to permit mutiny?"

"Have the stowaways mutinied, sir?" asked Mr. Jones, coolly, grinning at the preposterous suggestion.

"Don't stand there grinning like a ninny!" and Captain Mugford was quite beside himself with anger. "The stowaways mutiny! The stowaways have discovered the plot! You'd have let them steal the ship! You're as blind as a jellyfish!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Mr. Jones respectfully, realizing that Captain Mugford was indeed angry, and not blustering for the benefit of the stowaways, which was his first impression. "This is the first I've heard of any mutiny or plot, sir."

"First you've heard! Well, I'll tell you," and in a few brief, barking words Captain Mugford told of Billings' scheme as revealed by Al and Harry.

"Now go and get those two pirates!" he directed. "Bring them here! Bring Manuel first, and order Billings from aloft! Direct Mr. Dugmore to come with them! I'll teach them piracy!"

Mr. Jones, now deeply impressed, hurried on deck and presently returned with the Portuguese in charge.

"You! You!" bellowed Captain Mugford

when Manuel appeared. "What do you mean by plotting on my ship?"

"Me, I don't know whatta you talk about plotting, sir," said Manuel blandly. "I makka no plot."

"Don't lie, you scoundrel!" exploded Captain Mugford. "You're plotting mutiny!"

"I makka no plot," insisted Manuel.

And nothing else would he say, until presently Mr. Dugmore entered with Billings, who appeared much mystified at the summons.

"I'll have you in irons! I'll have you in irons, you scoundrel!" Captain Mugford burst forth. "Mutiny! Plot to steal *my* ship, will you!"

"Did th' stowaways spin that yarn?" asked Billings, a grin on his ugly face." I suppose they did. I was havin' some fun with 'em, just t' scare 'em and see what they'd do. I wasn't thinkin' you'd listen to 'em, sir. You know I couldn't steal your ship, sir, if I wanted to, which I don't."

At first Captain Mugford was skeptical of Billings' plausible explanation, but finally

accepted it and dismissed Billings and Manuel, quite satisfied that Billings had been indulging in a joke at the expense of the stowaways, and warning him that jokes of that sort must not be made on his ship, and must not be repeated.

"Now you stowaways, get out!" he blurted, "and don't come to me with any more cock and bull stories! Now get out of here!"

"But, sir," began Al, "I'm sure—"

"Pish!" exploded Captain Mugford. "Pish and fiddlesticks! What you doing heie? I said get out!"

"Billings *did* intend to do it, I'm certain," said Al, wiping the perspiration from his forehead when he and Harry were again on deck.

"Anyhow we did our part," and Harry was vastly relieved.

"Yes," Al agreed. "It won't be our fault now if anything happens, and I don't believe Billings and Manuel will dare try it after this, for they'll think they're watched."

"No," said Harry, "they won't dare now."

But Billings that day in passing Al on the deck found opportunity to say:

"The old fool didn't believe you, did he? Well, I'll fix you two before I'm through, for tellin' him. Don't forget that! Want t' go home, don't you? Well, you'll never go home now!"

CHAPTER XIII

PINCHED BY THE ICE PACKS

IT WAS quite natural that Al and Harry should have felt a degree of resentment toward Captain Mugford. In their hearts they knew well enough that Billings' piratical plans had been laid with full intention of execution, and they were aggrieved that Captain Mugford had accepted Billings' version rather than their own, and had shown no appreciation of their efforts to protect the ship and crew.

It was hard for them to believe that not only Captain Mugford, but Mr. Jones and Mr. Dugmore as well, had accepted Billings' explanation, for both he and the Portuguese were obviously looked upon with suspicion and dislike by officers and crew. Why in this instance they should have been credited was not easy for the boys to understand.

But, after all, the whole plan seemed too preposterous to be anything but a practical

joke on the stowaways, as Billings had declared it to be. And perhaps, though he may have had lingering doubts, Captain Mugford, who required the services of the two men, decided that it was better to accept the explanation and obviate trouble by keeping Billings and Manuel separated as far as possible in future.

Al had made no reply to Billings. He had no doubt that Billings would fulfill this threat if opportunity offered, and he lost no time in warning Harry of what had occurred.

"He will, too," said Harry, when the two were alone. "There's no limit to what he'll do. I'm afraid of him, Al."

"We'll have to keep our eyes open and not give him a chance," counseled Al. "I can't see where he's likely to get much chance aboard ship. Even if Captain Mugford does believe he's all right, the crew doesn't like either him or Manuel, and we'll just stand with the crew."

"I—don't think the crew care much for me," Harry complained. "The Sky Pilot is friendly enough, but none of the others ever talk to me as they do to you."

"That's your own fault," declared Al.

"You've made them feel that you consider yourself better than any of them. You're getting over it, but you've got to go half-way if you want to make friends with them."

"I suppose it is my fault," Harry admitted. "They all seemed so rough and coarse at first, and I didn't want to mix with them. Somehow they don't seem so rough now. But I guess I don't know how to make friends."

A call of "All hands on deck" brought the boys tumbling out of their bunks the following morning two hours before their watch should have been called.

As they scrambled up the companionway stairs they were aware that something unusual was on foot. Captain Mugford was bellowing orders and all hands were shortening sail.

But they had not long to wait. Foresail and mainsail were scarcely lowered when the first blast of a gale struck them and laid the vessel upon her beam ends. It seemed to the boys that she could never right herself again. The jib, which had not yet been reefed, was torn to shreds. The wind shrieked through the

rigging. Everywhere was the terrifying boom and roar of crashing ice. Huge pans were lifted on edge, high into the air, as they came together with smashing explosions.

When the first force of the gale, which had burst with the fury of a hurricane, was past, the wind settled into a stiff but steady northeast blow, driving the ice before it.

With the partial abatement of the gale the foresail was hoisted, and the vessel headed south. It soon became apparent, however, that she was in a precarious position. On her right lay a solid ice pack, and on her left a moving pack closing in to narrow the lane of open water.

Even the inexperienced eyes of Al and Harry saw this, and they realized the grave danger of the *Sea Lion's* position, and that were she to be caught between the two packs she would in all probability be crushed as in a mighty vise.

Already the lane of water through which they were threading their way was all too narrow. Captain Mugford paced the deck in nervous anxiety, observing the ice closely, and

now and again shouting orders in his great, thunderous voice. Steadily and in unvarying tones the lookout in the barrel aloft indicated the course: "Port! Starboard! Port! Starboard! Steady!" Suddenly he paused, and when he spoke again it was to report:

"The packs are in contact, sir, to the s'uth'ard. I make out no opening."

"Any opening to the east or sou'east?" asked Captain Mugford.

"No opening anywhere, sir. A solid pack," came the answer.

Off their starboard bow, and attached to the western or stationary pack, lay a low but broad-spreading iceberg, like a great island of ice. Captain Mugford decided quickly.

"Mr. Jones," he directed, "we'll bear in past that berg and get in its lee and make fast. It'll act as a buffer. Sharp, now! Not too close! May be projecting ice!"

The men sprang to their places in obedience to the orders, which came quick and fast enough, and worked as only men can work whose lives are at stake, and in due time the *Sea Lion* slid past the iceberg and under its

lee, the sail rattled down, lines were run out, and the schooner was made fast to the berg.

But the vessel was by no means safe. The iceberg simply rendered her less likely to be crushed, and as a further precaution Captain Mugford decided to discharge a portion of the cargo, in order that she might rise as high in the water as possible, and with the hope that when the "pinch" came her rounded bottom would slide up and out of the water with the pressure of the floes beneath.

Every man of them worked. Even Spuds and Shanks were called from the galley and impressed into service.

"Overboard, you stowaways! Overboard!" thundered Captain Mugford, and overboard went Harry and Al with others of the crew to receive bags and boxes as they were discharged upon the ice, and to haul them to a place of safety.

And so the men were working with the frenzy of desperation while the pack drove nearer and nearer, and the space of open water became smaller, until at last the dreaded moment arrived, and a tremor went through

the schooner as the great ice ground upon her hull.

"Put out a boat! Lower away there! Lower away!" roared Captain Mugford. "Haul her away now! Haul her away!"

The boat was drawn a considerable distance out upon the ice to be resorted to as a means of escape, should the *Sea Lion* be lost and the men sent adrift upon the ice, as now seemed probable.

The vessel's timbers creaked and cracked under the pressure. All about was the crash and thunder of pounding floes and mighty seas. The whole world seemed destined to destruction.

The faces of the seamen looked grim enough as they awaited their fate. It is a terrible experience to be cast away upon the Arctic pack on the eve of winter, with scarce a hope of rescue. With a realization that this might be their lot, a feeling akin to terror took possession of the boys.

CHAPTER XIV

ADrift AND DESERTED

"SHE'S rising, sir," announced Mr. Jones, at length, in a tone of hopeful expectancy.

"Yes! Yes, I believe she is!" said Captain Mugford. "Lucky old schooner! Always was lucky!"

And sure enough the *Sea Lion* was rising. Her rounded sides were slipping upward, as the ice pressed upon them. She was sliding out of the jaws of the great vise, and as this fact became assured there was excitement and rejoicing among the crew.

And so it came to pass that presently the *Sea Lion*, lifted completely out of the water and upon the ice as the packs closed beneath her hull, lay high and dry, and uninjured, as an inspection disclosed.

The iceberg, too, served well as a bulwark of protection. Beneath the vessel and in its vicinity there was no "rafting" or buckling of the

packs when they came together, as was the case both to the north and south, where great pans were being piled one upon another with terrific crash and roar.

A long sledge, intended for use in traveling with Eskimo dogs, when the *Sea Lion* should be brought to winter quarters, had been put in use by the men to haul the cargo that had been unloaded to a safe point five hundred yards from the ship. There the goods had been dumped in a helter-skelter mass upon the ice.

"Mr. Jones, don't haul any more of the cargo away," directed Captain Mugford when it became apparent that the schooner was in no immediate danger, and four sledge loads had already been removed. "It's safe enough where it is; safe enough! We'll stow it in the hold again as soon as the vessel settles back on her keel."

"Can't we leave the stuff that's been hauled away where it is till we're ready for it?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Yes! Yes, but send some men out to stay with it," said Captain Mugford. "If wind changes ice'll break up. Mustn't lose it."

"I'll send Shanks and the stowaways," suggested Mr. Jones. "They can watch it as well as anyone, and I need the other men here to snug the vessel up."

"Very well. Very well. Shanks and the stowaways," agreed the Captain. "Let 'em load the sledge with firewood and take it over, and give 'em a tarpaulin and three or four boat-hooks to hold it up, for a shelter. Blankets and grub, too. Don't forget that. When things are snugged up here, send a couple of men out to stay with 'em."

And so it came about that the three boys were detailed as an ice party, and Harry and Al were to have their first experience in the open. It was uncomfortable enough out there in the bitter cold of the wind-swept ice fields, and there was little enthusiasm for the work. Indeed, Harry complained at what seemed to him an unnecessary hardship imposed upon them.

"Oh, what's the use of grumbling about it," said Al, impatiently. "You growl about everything. Somebody's got to do it, and it might as well be us. Anyhow it makes it harder when

you find fault about everything you're asked to do."

"'Twon't be more'n a day or two, if the wind comes around," cheered Shanks, when they halted with the heavily-laden sledge. "We'll fix up a shelter, and I guess we won't mind it much, with a fire."

"Well, anyway it won't hurt us," declared Al. "It'll be worth being a little cold to say we've slept out on the ice pack."

"How are we going to fix our shelter?" asked Harry, skeptically, as they finished unloading the sledge.

"We can build a back wall up against that ice hummock, and two side walls, so the front'll be away from the wind," suggested Shanks. "Boxes on the bottom and bags on top."

It was not so difficult, and presently with the goods piled into three walls about four feet high, they had an enclosure six feet wide and eight feet long shut in on three sides. Across the top of the walls Shanks arranged boat hooks as a support, and over them, with the help of Al and Harry, spread the tarpaulin for a roof. Fortunately it was a large tar-

paulin, and its outer edges fell to the ice on the three sides, and upon this blocks of ice, chopped from a hummock with an ax, were placed to hold it into position, with some bags which had not gone into the wall, to make firmer the anchorage.

"Now if you fellers'll go to the schooner and fetch another tarp to fold up and put inside for a floor to spread our blankets on, I'll put on a fire and get some grub ready," suggested Shanks.

"Why, it'll be a fine camp," declared Al, enthusiastically, as he and Harry set out with the sled for the additional tarpaulin.

"It doesn't seem so bad," Harry admitted. "If there's fire enough to keep it warm it'll be a good change from the ship, anyway. I'm tired of the stuffy fo'cas'le."

When the boys returned Shanks had a fire blazing in front of the improvised camp, and a kettle of ice melting for coffee. The ice of the Arctic pack, be it known, is quite fresh and sweet, and not salt, like the sea, and when means are at hand for melting it, water for cooking purposes and for drinking may always

be had. And when they had folded and spread the tarpaulin upon the ice within, they found the interior of their shelter warm and comfortable enough, with the heat which Shanks' fire radiated.

"It is fine!" exclaimed Al, when he and Harry had crawled in.

"It isn't so bad after all," agreed Harry. "Hurry along the grub, Shanks. I'm famished."

"So am I," said Al. "I could eat this tarpaulin raw."

"Now you fellers hold your hosses," admonished Shanks, as he put a handful of coffee into the pot. "Grub's comin'. I ain't loafin' on it. I'm hungrier'n seventeen whales myself."

Presently the air was redolent with the fragrance of coffee and frying bacon, than which is no more delicious odor in all the realm of cookery, and when Shanks announced, "Grub's ready; fall to," they "fell to" with a will, and when they had finished their meal of hardtack, coffee, and bacon to the last drop of bacon grease, Al declared he never knew things could taste so good, and that it was a "regular picnic."

"'Twould be," Shanks remarked, "only I went and forgot the ice cream and lemonade and cake and things."

It was mid-afternoon, and for a long while the three sat and talked of home, the present, the future, and the changes that would take place before their return to civilization. The wind whistled around their shelter, and in the distance was the boom of pounding ice, but they had become quite accustomed to this now, and if it had any effect upon them it was to make their shelter seem the cozier and snugger.

Al and Harry had rolled in their blankets that evening when Shanks, who had gone out for a "look at the schooner" before joining them, announced:

"There comes the two fellers the old man said he'd send to stay with us."

"Who are they?" asked Harry.

"Look like Manuel and Billings," said Shanks. "I wish he'd sent somebody else. I don't like them fellers."

"I wish he had sent somebody else," agreed Al, with some apprehension. "I wonder how it is he happened to send them."

"I dunno," answered Shanks, "but maybe they volunteered for the ice camp. Maybe Mr. Jones sent 'em. I guess he's glad enough to be rid of 'em whenever he can. Yes, it's Manuel and Billings, sure as shootin'."

"I'm afraid of those fellows!" said Harry.

"Oh, I ain't afraid of 'em, but I just don't like 'em," remarked Shanks, as he settled himself in his blankets. "There ain't anything to be afraid of. They can't do us any hurt."

"Rolled in for the night, eh?" said Billings when he and Manuel presently appeared at the entrance of the shack.

"Evenin'," said Shanks. "Goin' to stay with us?"

"Evenin'," grunted Billings. "What you s'pose we came for? Just for a walk?"

"Oh, I dunno," grinned Shanks. "Maybe to get the air. There's plenty of it blowin' around."

"Where be we goin' to have any room in there?" growled Billings. "What did you make it so small for? Expect us to sleep outside?"

"Oh, I guess there's room enough," said

Shanks. "Get in here alongside of me. Shove over, fellers."

Al and Harry moved over as far as possible, and Shanks drew close to them, while Billings, growling like an angry dog, which was a habit with him, and Manuel, in his accustomed sullen silence, stretched themselves at Shanks' end of the shelter.

It was six hours later when Al and Harry were awakened by a report like a cannon shot. Shanks was bending over a steaming kettle of porridge, while Billings and Manuel, smoking their pipes, sat on the sledge by the fire. A thick, impenetrable fog had settled while they slept, so dense that only the nearer ice hummocks a few feet away were discernible, in dim and spectral outlines, and all beyond a narrow radius of the camp was blotted out.

"I was just goin' to dig you fellers out," grinned Shanks, as they sat up and drew on their outer garments. "You was sleepin' forty knots an hour, and snorin' to beat the band."

Billings grunted an acknowledgment of their greetings, while Manuel smoked on in silence.

"Is the *Sea Lion* all right?" asked Al.

"Billings was out to look an hour ago, and says she's back in the water on an even keel, and they were takin' the cargo aboard," answered Shanks. "Ice has stopped drivin', and is settlin' down now. Hear her crack as she settles?"

"When will we go aboard, Billings?" asked Harry.

"When the Captain orders us to," grunted Billings, ill-naturedly.

"Jiminy, but the fog is thick!" remarked Al, as he and Harry joined the others at the fire.

"Thick as mud," agreed Shanks. "The schooner can't do anything but lie to where she is till it lifts, and I reckon we can't do much anyway till the ice spreads. That's the reason the old man ain't in a hurry to call us back, and he ain't likely to call us till they get the other stuff stowed that was taken out."

The wind had shifted to the northwest, and had settled into a strong, steady blow, keen with frost, and breakfast was eaten under the comfortable shelter of the shack.

"I reckon," remarked Shanks, as they ate, "that as soon as the old man thinks there's no more danger of gettin' pinched, and as soon as he's ready for us, he'll send some men out to help us pull this cargo back to the schooner. Won't he, Billings?"

"I take it he knows his business," Billings growled.

"But if the ice is cracking," suggested Harry, as a tremor went over the pack, "isn't it likely to crack right where we are and let us into the water?"

"No use a huntin' trouble till she comes our way," said Shanks. "I reckon the old man's keepin' an eye on things, and he'll take us off before there's any danger."

When they had finished eating Billings and Manuel shaved tobacco from black plugs, filled their pipes, lighting them with coals from the fire, and sprawled under the shelter to smoke. At the end of an hour Manuel rose, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and stepped just without the entrance for a few moments, observing the weather.

"Wind-a, she shift to west," he presently

observed. "Time-a now we hear from schooner."

"Well, I'm goin' to see why they don't take us aboard," said Billings, knocking out his pipe, buttoning his coat and joining Manuel. "Expectin' to leave us out here till they get good and ready, I reckon."

Billings and Manuel strode away, and were quickly lost in the fog, which if possible had grown denser. Fifteen minutes, a half hour, and an hour passed, and they did not return. The boom of ice became more frequent, and sometimes loud reports, very near to them, sent a tremor over the pack, and startled the boys.

"It's funny they don't come back," Shanks at length remarked. "I'm goin' to see what's up. Come on, fellers, and we'll look."

They plunged into the fog, along the trail they had followed upon their retreat from the ship, Shanks in the lead, with Harry and Al following in single file, and had gone less than a hundred yards when Shanks halted with an exclamation of astonishment. Before him was the edge of the ice, and beyond, lost in fog, the dark waters of the open sea.

"What is it?" asked Harry, excitedly.
"What has happened?"

"It's all open water here!" said Shanks.

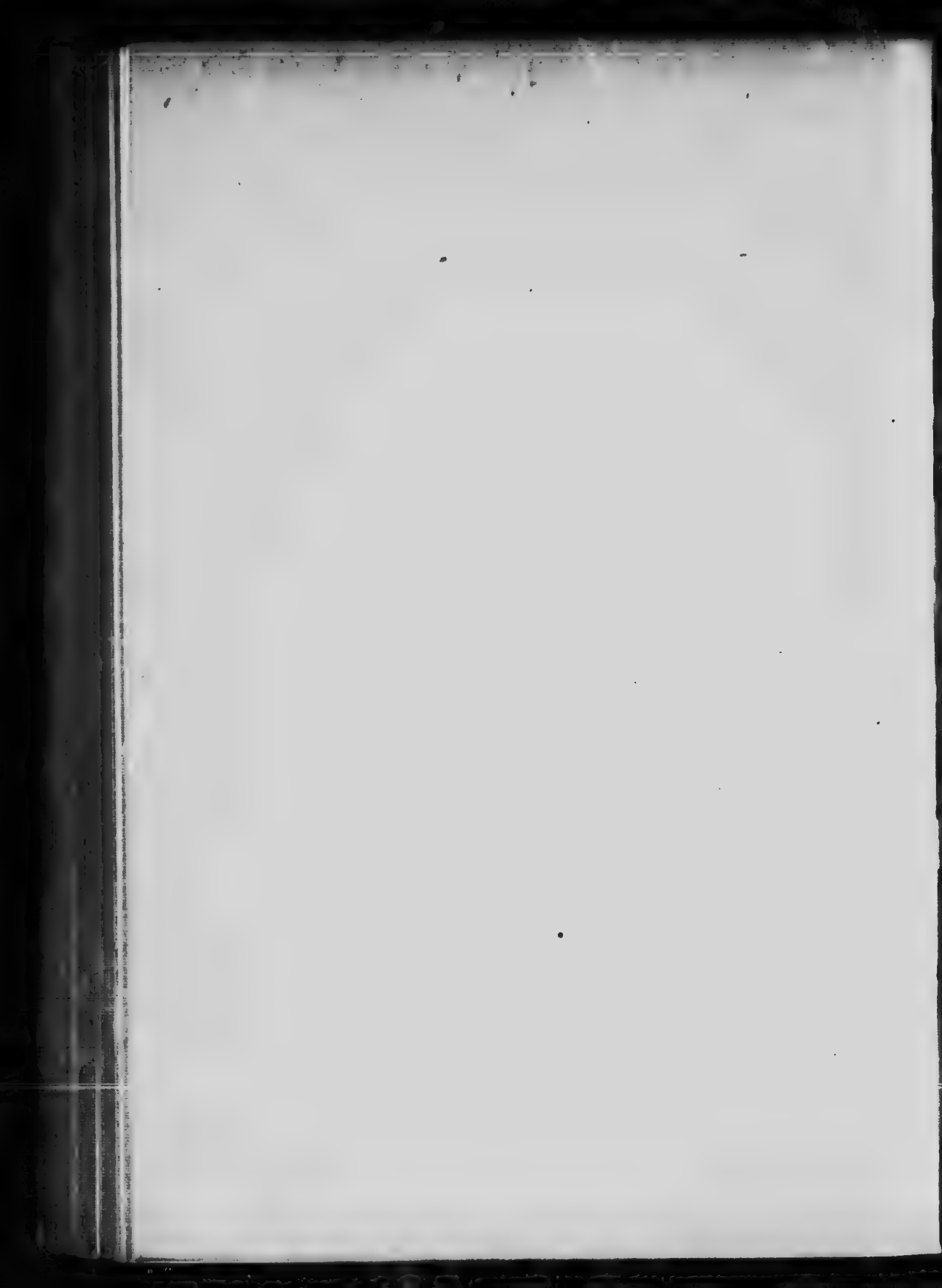
"Where have Billings and Manuel gone?"
asked Al, no less excited than Harry.

"No tellin'," said Shanks. "And the boat!
That's gone, too!"

They ran along the edge of the ice and shouted and shouted, but no answer came out of the fog save the boom of cracking ice. Then they realized the terrible truth. The pack had broken up, and they were adrift on a floe. Billings and Manuel had taken the boat, which had been put out upon the ice, and had left them to their fate.



The pack had broken up, and they were adrift on a floe



CHAPTER XV

CAST AWAY ON THE NAKED ROCKS

"**W**HAT'LL become of us? What'll become of us?" Harry wailed in consternation. "Won't the ship find us? Are we lost?"

"I dunno," answered Shanks, to whose superior experience Harry had appealed. "I guess they'll be lookin' for us all right, soon's the fog clears. It sort of 'pears like we're lost just now. We must have been driftin', and it looks like we're out of hearin' of the ship, and Billings and Manuel took the boat and left us. The miserable skunks!"

"It's a pretty mess!" exclaimed Al.

"A *'tarnal* mess!" emphasized Shanks, "and there ain't a dinged thing we can do to get out of it, either, till the fog lifts."

"Is the ship likely to find us?" asked Harry, with hope awakened. "If it doesn't find us is it the end for us?"

"I dunno," answered Shanks. "They'll find

us if they look where we be, but they won't find us if they look where we ain't. Maybe it's the end of us, and maybe 'tain't. I'm goin' to think 'tain't. I guess they'll find us all right when the fog clears. The chance is good they'll find us."

"It isn't possible we'll drift so far they won't?" suggested Al.

"'Twon't do any good to think that way," said Shanks, encouragingly, "and 'twon't do any good to fuss ourselves worryin' about what we can't help. Mostly I notice things work out all right. We might just as well go back to the shack out of the wind and take care of ourselves till the fog clears. We'll freeze here."

And so, in accordance with Shanks' sensible advice, they returned to the shack to wait and talk and speculate.

"I guess we'd better go easy on the wood," Shanks suggested. "We've been burnin' it just like we would if we had a hull wood lot out back here to cut from whenever we want more."

"What'll we do when it's gone?" asked

Harry with concern. "Suppose we're out here two or three days?"

"Seems like we'll be up against it when the wood's gone," admitted Shanks.

"I'll tell you what, fellows," suggested Al, "we'll wrap our blankets around us to keep warm and just use the wood for cooking."

"It's a heckin' good plan," seconded Shanks. "We won't suffer any. We've got blankets enough."

"I'm willing," agreed Harry.

"We'd better not all sleep at the same time," Shanks suggested. "One of us will keep on watch, to be on hand if anything should turn up. We'll take turns watchin'."

The reports of cracking ice ceased during the day, but through the fog in its stead came the sound of lapping waves on the edge of the floe. When bedtime came Harry took the first watch because, as he declared, he could not sleep anyhow. Shanks relieved him at the end of four hours, and Al had the third or morning watch.

It was a tedious four hours for Al. The silence was oppressive. Listening to the mo-

notonous lap-lap of waves on the edge of the floe, and the deep breathing of Harry and Shanks as they slept, drowsiness fell upon him several times and he went out and paced up and down upon the ice in an effort to arouse himself. Finally he wrapped a blanket around his shoulders and sat down, just within the shack.

"I won't go to sleep," he said. "I'll just close my eyes for a minute."

And he was quite sure that he had slept for only a minute, when presently he opened his eyes. But in the interval a marvelous change had taken place. The fog had cleared. The sun was shining brilliantly. Less than a hundred paces away was land! The great ice pan upon which they had been marooned was firmly fixed against a rocky shore, while stretching away from the stranded pan lay the open sea dotted with icebergs shimmering in the sunlight.

He sprang to his feet, quite astounded by the miracle, and shouted joyfully:

"Harry! Shanks! Wake up! We're ashore! We're ashore!"

"Well, by gum!" exclaimed Shanks, as he and Harry sprang up and joined their amazement to Al's.

"Oh!" breathed Harry, "Now we're safe!"

"I guess we wa'n't intended for drownin', leastways just yet," said Shanks, brushing his irrepressible yellow hair out of his eyes and scanning the sea. "No sign of the schooner anywheres, or any other sail."

"Is she likely to find us here?" asked Al, apprehensively.

"I dunno," said Shanks. "If she comes this way she's likcly to find us."

"But *is* she likely to come this way?" insisted Al.

"I reckon they'll look over the ice to s'uth-'ard for us, and when they don't find us they'll make up their minds we've gone to look for Davy Jones. They can't spend much time lookin'. It's most time they got into winter quarters."

"What'll we do if they don't find us?" asked Harry, a sudden fear seizing him. "We can't live here?"

"I dunno," said Shanks. "Maybe Eskimos'll come along. If they don't we'll have to make the best shift at it we can. We've got grub enough to last us for a spell, anyhow."

And so it came to pass that, happy at their immediate escape, though troubled for the future, they cooked and ate a hurried breakfast and then went over the ice to the shore to survey their surroundings.

The land was desolate in the extreme. Fortunately they had been driven into a small, protected cove, and presently they fell upon a little sheltered hollow at the head of the cove where they determined to pitch their camp, and began at once to transfer the supplies from the ice to the land, hauling them on the sledge, and at the end of two hours the last package was ashore.

"Supposin' now we make a tent something like Indians use," suggested Shanks. "It'll be easier than makin' a shack like we had on the ice, and it'll do us until the schooner finds us, if she's goin' to find us, and if she ain't goin' to find us we'll have to fix something different anyhow."

"Just as you say," said Al. "You've spent a winter in the Arctic, and you know better what to do than either of us."

"How'll you make a tent?" asked Harry, incredulously.

"I'll show you," said Shanks. "It's easy. It won't be much of a tent, but it will do."

Shanks gathered together the boat hooks, and laying them in a pile cut an end from a rope that had been used to lash the load on the sledge in transferring the goods from the *Sea Lion* to the ice camp. This he wrapped around the handles of the bundle of boat hooks six inches from the end, and tied it securely. Now up-ending the handles, with the tied end upward, he spread apart the lower ends.

"There," said Shanks, "we've got the frame ready. You fellers help me and we'll wrap one of the tarpaulins around it for the cover. We'll just cover it all up, I guess. It'll be warmer than leaving a smoke hole on top. We'll do our cookin' outside. We haven't got much wood left, anyway."

When the tent was finished its peak was very low, and it was none too large for comfortable

sleeping, but they agreed that it would answer well enough as a temporary shelter.

"I think one of us better be on watch all the time," suggested Al, when they were finally as comfortably settled as possible. "If the schooner comes this way we'll be likely to see her then, and signal her."

"That's a bang-up idea!" said Shanks.

"I'll take the first watch," said Al. "I fell asleep on watch this morning, but I won't do it again."

"All right," Shanks agreed, "Harry and I'll look over the stuff we got here, and see how much of it's tradin' goods, that can't be et if we need it, and how much is grub."

The survey disclosed eight bags of hardtack, one box of smoked and one of unsmoked bacon in strips, two cases of canned tomatoes, three cases of canned corn, two boxes of tea, a box containing twelve one-pound tins of ground coffee, a box filled with small sacks of salt, some bags of sugar containing thirty pounds each, and a box of dried prunes. There was also a case of matches.

The remainder of the goods were chiefly

articles of trade. There was a case of six repeating rifles, a case of six muzzle-loading trade guns, a quantity of ammunition for both, and a barrel of fox traps. Other boxes were filled with odds and ends—needles, thread, beads, ribbons, jackknives, sheath knives, and other knickknacks, dry goods and sundries, much of which would prove of little use to the castaways in case of need.

"We've got a good bunch of grub, anyhow," said Shanks. "That's the main thing. It'll last us quite a spell, if we don't get away from here pretty soon."

The inventory was scarcely completed when Al, keeping watch on a rocky bluff at the water's edge, began gesticulating wildly and shouting:

"A boat! A boat!"

Harry and Shanks, vastly excited, ran down to the bluff, where Al was still frantically waving his jacket, which he had drawn off.

"They see us!" announced Al, joyfully, as the two boys breathlessly scrambled up the bluff. "They see us! They're coming this way!"

"There's only two men in her," said Shanks, after watching the approaching boat for a few moments. "'Pears strange they'd send her out with only two men."

"That does seem strange," admitted Al.

"Don't you know 'em?" asked Shanks, presently. "Can't you make 'em out now? That's Billings and Manuel."

And so it proved, when the boat drew in a little later, and they stepped ashore. The three boys welcomed Billings and Manuel enthusiastically, glad to see even them in this forsaken spot.

"We took th' boat to go and hunt up th' schooner, thinkin' to come back after you fellers when we'd located her," explained Billings, in an affable manner, when greetings were exchanged and they were walking to camp, "but we couldn't find her. We lost our bearings in the fog and couldn't locate you again. So we just pulled to the east'ard to get to shore. We was drawin' down to the s'uth'ard now, hopin' we'd run on Eskimos."

"We just drifted in here this morning," explained Al.

"Be you hungry?" asked Shanks, when they reached the improvised tent.

"Be we hungry!" exclaimed Billings. "We ain't et since we left you fellers. We're famished."

Their common trouble made the three boys forget, to some extent, their inherent dislike of Billings and Manuel, and while the two whalemens ate hardtack and bacon and drank hot coffee, they discussed, quite as though no difference had arisen, their unpleasant and perhaps dangerous situation. The drift of ice had been to the southeast after the change of wind. This was evidenced by the fact that the pan upon which the three boys were cast away had carried them to the Greenland shore. Billings and Manuel therefore expressed their opinion that the *Sea Lion* was still somewhere to the northward.

"How much grub you got?" asked Billings, finally.

Shanks detailed the result of the inventory of himself and Harry.

"That'll last for awhile," said Billings, "but it won't last the bunch of us all winter—or

more'n half the winter, if the vessel don't find us."

"But if she's to the northward she'll be likely to find us, won't she?" asked Harry, apprehensively.

"We'll keep watch for her. Maybe she will," was Billings' unsatisfactory answer.

The geniality of Billings and Manuel was of short duration. When night came and the five crowded into the small tent, they both found a great deal of fault, and Billings vented his ill nature upon the boys. The following morning Billings announced that he and Manuel would not spend another night in the tent, and that they would sleep thereafter in the boat. Accordingly, that evening the two carried their blankets to the boat, spread a sail over it as a protection, and left the boys to themselves.

"They're kind of perticler who they mix with," observed Shanks. "It gives us more room, anyhow, and I'd just as lief they'd flock by themselves."

"I'm glad enough they're not going to stay with us tonight," declared Al. "Nothing

seems to suit either of them, and Billings does nothing but growl."

"I'm glad they've gone, too," agreed Harry. "I wish they had never found us. I'm afraid of them. I hope the *Sea Lion* won't leave us here long."

"They seemed pretty decent when they came yesterday," said Al. "They don't know how to act human, though."

"They're just naturally cantankerous," remarked Shanks, as he turned over to sleep.

The three slept soundly that night, and the sun was just rising when Shanks, who was the first to awake, went out in the morning to make coffee. A moment later Al and Harry were startled by the exclamation:

"Well, by hookey, they've gone!"

"What's happened? Who's gone?" asked Harry and Al, excitedly, springing from their blankets and hurrying out to where Shanks was standing.

"Billings and Manuel!" exclaimed Shanks, "and the boat! And the most of our things, too!"

The three boys ran down to the shore, where

the boat had lain the evening before, and where the bulk of their provisions and supplies had been piled upon their arrival. The boat was gone, and a survey disclosed the fact that the two men had taken with them, also, as much of the supplies as the boat would hold.

CHAPTER XVI

"I CAN IF I WILL"

THE period of perpetual day had passed. The hours of night were perceptibly lengthening with each sunset and sunrise. There was a new sting of frost in the air. Everything spoke of the coming winter with its fearful Arctic cold and terrible period of continuous night. The small supply of wood which had been brought from the ice, though used with the strictest economy, would last but a few days at most.

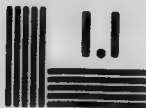
The three marooned boys were ill supplied with clothing. The heavy woolen socks and undergarments and knit woolen mittens were even now none too warm when they were idle, and the time was near at hand when warmer dress would be imperative.

They were indeed in a desperate position should the *Sea Lion* fail to come to their relief. On the day of their arrival one bag of hard-tack, a chest of tea, all of the coffee, a thirty-



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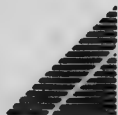
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pound bag of sugar, one box of bacon, the box of prunes, a case of tomatoes and one of corn, had been carried to the camp and piled near the tent entrance, that they might be at hand for immediate needs. Billings and Manuel, doubtless in fear that their departure might be discovered, had left these provisions undisturbed, but all of the other food had been taken save a half dozen small bags of salt.

Doubtless because there had not been room in the boat, the two deserters had also left behind them the greater portion of the trading goods, though the cases of guns had been broken open, and two rifles and two trade guns were missing, together with a quantity of ammunition. All of the matches, too, had been taken, save a half dozen boxes which Shanks had taken to the tent to protect them from the weather.

"Well," said Shanks, "they've cleaned us out of most everything that could be et."

"The cutthroats!" exclaimed Al, angrily. "I hope it'll choke 'em!"

"'Tain't likely to," said Shanks. "They'll eat it with care and caution, and it'll help 'em

along till they get some place where there's more grub."

"Where will they go?" asked Al.

"They'll cruise to the s'uth'ard till they find Eskimos, and hang out with the Eskimos for the winter," explained Shanks. "It looks like they don't expect the schooner to be comin' this way to look for us."

"Are we lost, then? Will we be left here to die?" asked Harry, seized again by all his old fears.

"I ain't ready to die yet," assured Shanks, "and I ain't going to if I can help it. The first thing for us to do is not to get scared. Old Uncle Zeke, down home, says there ain't any need of half the folks dyin' that dies when they're cast away and get in a tight place like we be. They mostly die because they get scared and give up when there ain't any need of it. He says to me: 'Boy, if *you* ever get cast away, never give up while there's breath of life left in you. Hustle and keep your grit, and the chances are more'n even you'll pull through.' I reckon the time's come for us to do some hustlin' and keepin' our grit."

"Don't you really think the ship will find us soon?" asked Harry.

"Honest, I don't," admitted Shanks. "The way I figger it is this: She's gone south searching the ice for us. Maybe she'll try to get back, but I reckon the ice'll cut her off, and she'll have to get in some place for the winter. She'll go quite a piece south before she gives up findin' of us on the ice."

"Let's go back to the tent and have breakfast, and make our plans," suggested Al. "We'll make a go of it somehow, even if we do have to stay here. I'm for hustling and keeping our grit, and I'm for beginning to hustle right way. But we'll feel better after we eat."

"That's good hoss sense," agreed Shanks.

Gloomy enough they were as they filed back to the tent, but presently a pot of steaming coffee and a pan of sizzling bacon were ready, and, after the manner of humans, in which the love of life is strong, their spirits rose as they ate. Matters did not seem so desperate by half. They entered with vim into their plans, and decided they were glad to be rid of the

two sulky men—or would have been glad had the men not robbed them of their food.

"Say," remarked Shanks, suddenly, "them fellers didn't take any pot to make tea in, and they clean forgot a fryin' pan for their bacon. I've an extra pot and an extra fryin' pan I'd have let 'em have if they'd just spoke of it."

"And they haven't got any wood, either! I never thought of that!" exclaimed Al. "What'll they do?"

"I dunno," grinned Shanks, "but I ain't goin' to worry none about them fellers. They've got tin mugs in the boat, and they'll make tea in them, I reckon, and they'll make some shift for a fire. They'll find twigs and moss enough to burn to melt ice till they kill a seal, and then they'll burn the fat."

"I hope they'll have it good and hard!" declared Harry. "They deserve it."

"They'll have it hard enough," said Shanks, "but they're old timers and they'll make out."

"What we've got to think about is how we'll make out," suggested Al. "We've got to have more to eat, and this isn't much of a tent."

"Yes," agreed Shanks, "we got to rig up a

warmer and roomier place to live in. 'Twon't be long till we'll freeze in this tent. But the first thing is grub. Can you fellers shoot?"

"All the shooting I ever did was with a twenty-two rifle," said Al.

"And that's all I ever did," said Harry.

"There's a chance to get some seals," suggested Shanks, "and we can kill some birds and maybe get some hares back here. The birds won't stay much longer. They'll soon be goin' south, and I take it we better kill all we can while we got a chance. We'll all hunt, and while we're huntin', keep our eyes peeled seaward for the schooner. We can't miss her if she's in hailin' distance. This way we won't lose time by one feller keepin' on watch and doin' nothin' else.

"I'll show you two how to load and use the trade guns. They're muzzle-loading shotguns, you know. It's easy to get the birds, they're so tame. Every time we get a chance at seals we'll shoot 'em. I'm pretty good at that."

"What'll we do about a warmer camp?" asked Harry.

"We'll have to conjure up something, and I

don't rightly know what," said Shanks. "But let's go for the grub first. These shoes and clothes won't do us either. We'll have to fix up some warmer clothes and footgear."

"How'll we do that?" asked Harry, in consternation. "There's no way to get clothes here!"

"I dunno yet," admitted Shanks, "but it's sure and certain we'll have to work it somehow. I'll work my noddle, and I'll think of something. Mostly folks find a way of gettin' things they need if they go for it for all they're worth, and that's what we got to do from this on. Uncle Zeke says it's that way, and he's most always right. He says to me once, 'Peter, my lad, sometimes folks says, when a hard job's put up to 'em, 'I'll do it if I can.' You just shift that, and make your sailin' orders 'I can if I will.' If you do that and stand by, you'll make the port you're sailin' for against most any wind that blows!'"

A half mile above the camp was a small island, lying very near the mainland, which was literally alive with birds. Upon investigation it was discovered that a solid jam of

ice formed a safe bridge to the island, and when Shanks had duly instructed Al and Harry in the use of the muzzle-loading shot-guns the three set out for their first hunt.

It was an exciting experience, and the birds were so tame and easily killed that when they turned back to camp, late in the afternoon, they found that their day's work had brought them thirty eider ducks, seven looms, and two gulls.

"We won't starve for awhile anyhow!" said Harry, gleefully, when they had taken stock of their hunt.

"Nope," agreed Shanks, "but we've got to keep at it."

"It's great to go out and hunt your living, just like the Indians," said Harry, with his first display of enthusiasm.

"Isn't it great!" exclaimed Al. "It's worth while to know that we can get our living without depending on the ship or anybody!"

"We'll have a lot of living to get yet," suggested Shanks. "Did you fellers notice the old duck nests around among the rocks on the ground?"

"No," said Al, "I didn't. I was just looking for the ducks."

"Neither did I. What about them?" asked Harry.

"Just that the eider duck nests are made of eider down," said Shanks, "and it's worth knowin' where they be."

"What good will that do us?" asked Harry.

"We'll gather up enough of the down to stuff some beds," suggested Shanks. "We can sleep on 'em and make a down bed to cover us with, too, like the Dutch do. How's that for an idea?"

"It's fine!" said Harry.

"It would be a bang-up idea if we had the ticks," Al admitted.

"We'll get the ticks, all right," assured Shanks. "You wait and see."

"How? Where can we get ticks here?" asked Al, incredulously.

"Just hold your hosses now, and you'll find out," Shanks grinned, but he would make no explanation.

The eider ducks that Shanks grilled over the coals, after boiling the tea water, were not

very thoroughly cooked, because of the lack of wood, but the appetites were keen enough for small deficiencies to be overlooked, and the fresh birds proved a delicious and welcome change from the diet of salt meat.

"We'd be gettin' sick with scurvy if we kept on eatin' salt meat," remarked Shanks, as he smacked his lips over the ducks. "Billings and Manuel didn't leave us enough bacon, though, to give anybody scurvy."

"We'll just keep the bacon for a treat," suggested Al.

"It'll go fine about twice a week," said Shanks. "Now, we got a little while before dark, let's get busy on those ticks."

CHAPTER XVII

THE PROBLEM OF FIRE AND SHELTER

SHANKS led Harry and Al to the trading goods, which still remained on the shore where they had originally been piled, and began at once to unpack and investigate the contents of the cases.

"Do you expect to find bed ticks here?" asked Harry, with a tinge of sarcasm.

"Nope," said Shanks, "but I expect to find the makin's. We fellers ain't goin' to find anythin' to speak of made up and ready for us when we're needin' of it. We'll mostly have to do our own makin' and buildin' and fixin'."

In one of the cases they discovered some bolts of heavy woolen blanket duffel, two or three bolts of white moleskin cloth, and some heavy unbleached muslin. Shanks extracted one of the bolts of muslin, and from another case some coarse needles and a hank of linen thread, and taking from the stock a sheath

knife for himself, he handed one also to each of the others.

"We may as well take 'em," he explained. "They'll come in handy."

"What are you going to do with the muslin?" asked Harry.

"Make the ticks," said Shanks. "Can you fellers sew?"

"I never used a needle in my life," Al admitted.

"Neither did I," said Harry, dubiously.

"Well, you're goin' to now," promised Shanks, with a grin, "and it's high time you learned, for I guess you're goin' to have a lot of sewin' to do, from the look of this cloth, and I'm good and glad we got it to sew."

"What will we sew on that for?" asked Harry, inquisitively.

"You'll see," grinned Shanks. "That'll wait till we get the ticks made and filled, though. We better go up to the tent to do our work."

"Now, how'll we go about it?" asked Al, when they had returned to the tent.

"I been planning her out this way," explained Shanks. "I guess we better make two

big ticks, and when we get 'em filled with down sew 'em together around the bottom and the two sides. That'll make a big sleeping bag that we can all get in. We'll be warmer all sleepin' together. I'm the lengthiest one, and it'll have to be long enough to give me room to stretch, and I guess we'll just make the ticks about two foot longer'n I am from stem to stern."

"All right," laughed Al, "but how shall we get your measure? Pace it off?"

"Nope," Shanks grinned, getting down and lying full length on the ground. "Harry, you take one end of the cloth and hold it about two foot beyond my feet. Now, Al, you unroll the bolt and take your knife and cut the cloth off just above my head."

"There you are," said Al, when the strip of muslin was cut off. "It looks like a pretty long tick."

"'Twon't be a short one," admitted Shanks. "Now, we'll cut the other strips from that one, so they'll all be the same length."

Shanks was not inexperienced with a needle. His mother had taught him to sew, that he

might repair his clothing when absent at sea. But Al and Harry were awkward enough. However, there was no attempt at neatness, for there was need of hurry. Long stitches, but firm enough, were taken, and, although their fingers grew stiff with cold and they were frequently compelled to slap their arms around their shoulders to warm them, before dark the first tick was ready to receive the down.

"We've been havin' a great run of fine weather," suggested Shanks, as they finished their sewing, "and it ain't goin' to last. We've got to do some good hustling while we can."

The following day, seventeen eider ducks, four looms and three gulls were killed. The birds were growing shy with much shooting, and were not so easily approached. But the tick was filled with down, and in the afternoon the second tick was completed, to be filled before dark.

And so it came to pass that the two boys enjoyed that night the luxury of a thick down bed. Heretofore they had been cold at night, but now they discovered, upon experiment, that the second bed drawn over them

in addition to their blankets was much too warm.

"We'll keep it for colder weather," suggested Shanks, "and we'll need it all right. We don't need any blankets under us now, so we can just use what we want to cover us up."

This solved the problem of a bed, for the present at least, and the following morning they declared they had slept warm and comfortable.

"Seals are pretty shy critters," remarked Shanks, when at breakfast that morning, "but I reckon I may be able to knock one or two over with a rifle, and I'm goin' to try. We need the fat, and we'll need a lot of it before the winter's over. We can eat the meat, too. Do you fellers want to try for 'em, too?"

"Yes," said Al, "I'd like to."

"So would I," assented Harry.

"Well, I guess we'd better not travel together. We'll separate and lie low, and see if we can't pot 'em on shore," directed Shanks. "'Twon't do any good to shoot 'em in the water — they'd sink; and anyway we couldn't get 'em without a boat. I'll poke along up to the

n'uth'ard, and you fellers separate and nose along to the s'uth'ard. Keep your eyes peeled for 'em asleep on the rocks."

When the three boys returned to camp late in the afternoon Shanks exultantly reported three seals killed, one a great bearded seal, or "square-flipper," as he called it, and two small harbor seals. Al had made several unlucky shots, and had no seals to his credit, though he had killed a hare, which Shanks estimated weighed fully twelve pounds. Harry had been more fortunate, and had secured one harbor seal.

"That's a fine day's hunt for us," Shanks declared. "We'll get more of 'em, and if our luck holds we'll get enough fat to last us the winter out, and we'll need it, too, bimeby. We need it now, for we'll be at the end of our wood tonight."

"Just a little way below here, in the next cove," said Al, "there's a high hill. Its face is almost straight up, and it was alive with birds—little auks, mostly. I never saw so many birds. There were thousands of them. They nearly shut out the sky when I disturbed

them, there were so many. Why can't we get a lot of them?"

"That's a rookery, I guess," explained Shanks. "We can get some of 'em all right. The Eskimos net 'em, skin 'em, and eat the birds and make shirts out of the skins."

"There's the last of the wood," said Al, who had been cutting it for the fire while Shanks made ready for dinner. "What shall we do now? Burn the boxes the goods are in?"

"Nope," objected Shanks. "We'll need them boxes t' help fix up some kind of a place t' live. It's gettin' pretty nigh too cold t' stay in the tent now."

"But we can't live without a fire, either," said Harry, in consternation.

"We've got t' work somehow t' get both," agreed Shanks. "Pretty soon it's goin' t' be colder'n all git out, and it gits colder up here in th' Arctic than you ever thought it could. You'll see. We got t' have a place t' live in and we've got t' have fire. Them's just two of th' things we *got* t' have, and there's a lot more t' think about when we git them."

"Well," and Harry's voice was filled with

discouragement. "we may as well give up now. There isn't any wood for a fire, and we can't make a house out of a few boxes."

"We've got t' hustle, and keep our grit, like Uncle Zeke says," counseled Shanks. "'Tain't my nature t' give up while I've got any go in me, and we've all got quite some in us yet."

"We can't do what isn't possible," insisted Harry. "We can't build a house out of nothing, and we can't have a fire with nothing to burn."

"A feller don't know what's possible and what ain't till he tries every way he knows, and we ain't begun t' try what we can do yet. I don't know how we're goin' to git a place t' live in any more'n you do," admitted Shanks, "but if we git a place I've got an idea about a fire. Maybe it'll work and maybe it won't, but we'll try it out tonight."

CHAPTER XVIII

SHANKS' INGENUITY

FOR a little the boys fell silent, while Shanks prepared dinner. The outlook was dismal enough, and crowding around the meager little fire they were cold and miserable both in body and mind. Shanks alone retained a degree of cheerfulness, and presently he remarked:

"We'd better go and get our seal fat and seal meat in before dark. Leastways as much as we'll have time for. We mustn't burn them boxes. I'll rig up a way to burn seal oil."

"How'll you do that?" asked Harry.

"I'll fix some way, I guess; I've thought it out. You'll see," Shanks promised. "What's botherin' me mostly is how to fix up some sort of a place to live in this winter where we won't freeze even if we have t' burn oil. We'll need th' boxes, maybe, to help out with that. There's so dinged many things to do, a feller don't know which way to turn. We need the

shelter, and we ought to hunt while we got the chance to."

"There's a hole in the side of the hill right down here," said Al, "a sort of cave, that I noticed today. It's half filled up with loose stones, but I think we could clean it out and cover the front with a tarpaulin, and make a pretty good den out of it. There would be a good deal more room in it than in this tent, and we could take all our things in it."

"That's bang up!" exclaimed Shanks. "Let's all go and look it over as soon as we've et dinner."

They hurriedly ate, and then hastened over to Al's cave, which proved to be an opening in the side of a cliff extending back into the cliff some eight feet, and perhaps twelve feet long. The roof of the cave in front was about seven feet high, sloping back to five feet in the rear. It contained a quantity of disintegrated rock and small boulders, and there was much to be done before it could be made habitable.

"We can make a pretty snug cabin out of that," said Shanks. "We couldn't have had it better if it was made to order."

"I don't see how we can fasten the tarpaulin up over the front so it will stay," objected Harry. "There isn't anything to fasten it to."

"That's what bothered me," said Al. "There's no way of fastening it against the rock."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," suggested Shanks. "We'll build a stone wall up over the front to close it up, and just leave a place to crawl through for a door. We can hang the tarpaulin over the wall inside, and fasten it up all right. Then it will hang down and cover the hole we crawl through, and we can lift it when we go in or out."

"It will be a lot of work," said Harry, dubiously. "It'll take a good while."

"We can do it all right. 'Twon't be such a big job when we all get at it," said Shanks, encouragingly.

"It's a good idea," agreed Al, enthusiastically. "Let's go for it in the morning."

"All right," said Shanks, "that'll be our job for tomorrow. When we get our house fixed up we can spend our time hunting."

The seals were near at hand, and with hard work the greater part of the meat and blubber had been carried into camp and piled near the tent before growing darkness put an end to the evening's work.

"We can bring the rest of it in one load," said Al. "It's a fine day's work."

"'Tis that!" agreed Shanks. "Now let's have some tea."

"How'll we get a fire to make it without wood?" asked Harry. "I don't believe that seal fat will burn."

"It'll burn, all right," asserted Shanks, with assurance. "You just watch and see. It's all the kind of fire we're going to have this winter, too."

Inside the little tent Shanks found a level place on the ground, where he set one of his two frying pans. Then he looked around until he found a flat stone with one straight side just small enough to fit in the pan. The stone was a half-inch thicker than the depth of the pan, and reaching across the pan at its widest part, left one-half of the pan empty.

He now proceeded to squeeze a piece of

blubber into the empty side of the pan, with the result that presently it was more than half filled with oil. Then, tearing a strip four inches wide from the end of the muslin, he folded it until it was just long enough to reach across the pan. This he moistened in the oil, and then, with one edge of the folded muslin strip resting on the bottom of the pan and in the oil, he lay the other edge on the straight stone, which served to support it a little way above the oil. This was to be the wick.

These arrangements completed, Shanks departed with the kettle and the ax, presently to return with the kettle filled with water from a brook which fell down over the rocks a short distance from camp and whose swift current had not yet succumbed to the growing cold. He also brought with him three sticks which he had split from the cover of one of the boxes, and a spool of copper wire which he had previously observed in one of the cases of trading goods.

With the wire he bound the sticks together near one end, and, spreading the other ends, formed a tripod, which he placed over the pan

of oil. He now made a loop of wire through the bale of the kettle and of proper length to suspend the kettle directly over the wick, with the wire loop hooked into the top of the tripod to support it.

"Now, we'll see how she works," said Shanks, striking a match and applying it to the wick.

"I never would have thought of that!" exclaimed Al, as the wick ignited its whole length and a yellow flame rose beneath the kettle.

"Why, it's simply great!" echoed Harry. "How did you ever think of it, Shanks?"

"'Twan't my idea," Shanks modestly admitted, though with considerable pride nevertheless. "I got it from the Eskimos. That's the way they burn seal oil in their stone lamps, and I just had an idea I could make a lamp out'n that fryin' pan. I don't believe I could have dug it out'n my own head if I hadn't seen the huskies work it first."

"It's warming the tent, too," declared Al. "I feel it already."

"I'm glad of that. I haven't been warm

once, except when I was working and exercising," Harry complained.

"That's what I was countin' on," said Shanks. "If we get blubber enough to keep about two lamps burnin', we'll keep our cave warm enough so we won't freeze in winter. But we'll have to get the front of it walled up good and tight, and we'd better be doin' of it just as soon as we can. There ain't much time now before winter sets in."

Presently the tent became so warm it was found necessary to open the front a little way, and in a remarkably short time the kettle boiled. As Shanks set it off and threw into a handful of tea, he asked:

"Did you fellers ever eat seal liver?"

"No," said Al, "we never had a chance."

"What is it like?" asked Harry. "But I don't care much. Whatever it's like it would taste good to me now. I could almost eat the blubber, I'm so hungry."

"We'll just celebrate with a pan of liver and bacon," Shanks announced, "and you fellers can see what it's like."

"Isn't this great!" remarked Al, as he and

Harry lounged back and luxuriated in the warmth while Shanks manipulated the pan of sizzling liver and bacon.

"It's the best we've had since we left the ship," Harry declared.

"Here we be," said Shanks, presently, depositing the pan between them. "Pass over your mugs for tea, and we'll go to it."

It was indeed a feast, though the seal liver had a decidedly fishy flavor. But the keen appetite of youth, made keener by an invigorating life in the open, is not discriminating, and the three boys enjoyed the meal hugely.

Now that the problem of their winter shelter seemed to have been solved, and a means for obtaining fire and warmth discovered, they were more hopeful and optimistic when they rolled into their blankets than at any time since they had been cast away.

"We'll get busy on the cave first thing in the morning," remarked Shanks, as he turned over to go to sleep. "We can get it done in a day or two, and then we can just pitch into the hunting and lay up a good stock of grub. We must get a lot more ducks and seals."

"Yes," said Al, sleepily, "and we'll make out all right even if we haven't got the grub Billings and Manuel took."

But they were to learn that plans seldom work out as they are made, and that the wilderness contains many surprises. They were sleeping very soundly when suddenly they were awakened. All three sat up with a jerk, and simultaneously, to listen, and an ominous and startling roar fell upon their ears.

CHAPTER XIX

"KEEP HOPIN' AND KEEP A-GOIN' "

THERE was a swishing sound like that of a lash drawn through the air. Then the tent leaned as though it would be drawn from its anchorage. The gale had fairly broken, and was tearing and raging and shrieking over them like a hundred unchained demons.

"Get into your clothes, fellers, quick!" said Shanks, excitedly. "The tent's likely to be blown away, and our beds with it!"

They were silent while they scrambled into their clothing, groping in the dense darkness for their things, while the low tent rocked and strained over their heads and their ears were filled with the tumult of the wind, which had settled into a prolonged shriek, and out of the distance came the explosion and crash of pounding ice pans, like the incessant roar of artillery.

"What can we do?" asked Harry, desperately, when they were dressed.

"Hold on to the tent poles and keep 'em down if we can! There ain't anything else we can do," directed Shanks. "Let's hang to 'em, and just pull down from the top for all we're worth. The big rocks we rolled on the tarpaulin around the edges may keep it from going."

Presently the light of early dawn began to filter in where the canvas overlapped to form the entrance, and as the light grew snow was discovered to be sifting in.

"Why, it's snowing, too!" exclaimed Al, who was the first to observe it.

"Sure as shootin'!" said Shanks. "Well, it was overdue. We've had the longest spell of fine weather I ever knew in these parts."

Then came a giant blast, the little tent tottered, hesitated for a moment, and was lifted up and carried away.

"Lie down on the blankets!" shouted Shanks. "Lie down and try to hold 'em!"

There followed a maelstrom of blinding, choking snow, that rendered speech impossible as the three lay face down upon the blankets and clung desperately to them.

Fortunately the gale had reached its height and presently began to subside. In the shelter of the little hollow where the camp had been pitched they had escaped the greater fury of the Arctic hurricane, else all their belongings would doubtless have been swept away with the first blast. When at length, stiff with cold, they deemed it safe to release their hold on their blankets, they were so numbed and chilled they could scarcely move.

The snow was still drifting over them in blinding clouds, but with an effort they drew from beneath their down bed the tarpaulin which had served as a floor for the tent, and spreading the bed again, drew the tarpaulin over bed and blankets. Then to their dismay they discovered that the second down bed, which had been designed as a covering, as well as two pairs of blankets, were gone. To search for them then, to make any attempt to move about, indeed, was not possible.

Miserable and cold, they huddled together, drew their blankets and the tarpaulin over themselves, and at length were fairly warm.

"I'm hungry," Al finally announced. "I'm going to get a hardtack biscuit. Do you fellows want one?"

"Of course we do," said Harry.

"Fetch two for each of us," suggested Shanks. "We'll need 'em!"

And when Al crawled back again with the biscuits they lay and munched them, and glad enough they were for even this slim breakfast.

It was evening before the storm permitted them to leave their shelter. To their vast relief they discovered a little distance away, clinging to a rock, the tarpaulin which had served as their tent. This was reclaimed, and with some difficulty, and fingers stiff with cold, the boys re-erected and anchored it down with heavy bowlders placed upon its edge.

"Now we'll get our oil fire goin', and warm up," encouraged Shanks. "There's no use trying to find anything else until the snow lets up more, and it's most dark, anyhow. I'll get water for coffee and light up, and while I'm doing it you fellers better shake the snow out of things, so it won't melt and make our bed wet."

A final inventory, when at length they were settled again and the tent was warm, disclosed the fact that not only the down bed and two pairs of blankets were missing, but two cooking kettles also, and finally came the tragic discovery that all the matches, save a handful that Shanks had in his pocket, were gone.

The boys looked at each other in consternation. This was indeed a calamity. Shanks counted the matches in his pocket. There were forty-seven, and forty-seven matches would not last long.

"What'll we do now?" asked Harry. "We can't live without fire, and we can't get fire without matches."

"I dunno," admitted Shanks, with the first show of defeat and dejection he had displayed. "I dunno."

"We'll have to be careful of what we've got, and not waste any," counseled Al, bravely, "and perhaps before they're gone something will turn up."

"Maybe there will," and Shanks, with his ever buoyant optimism and cheerful view, brightened. "If we had our cave fixed up, and

we could kill seals enough to have plenty of blubber, we could keep a fire burning all the time. Anyhow, as Uncle Zeke says to me, 'never give up, but keep hopin' and keep a-goin' as long as the breath of life keeps in you, and you've got a bit of strength.' We've got plenty of the breath of life in us and plenty of strength, and I ain't goin' to get discouraged, not just yet."

"We've done things already we wouldn't have thought we could do, a month ago, and I won't get discouraged, for one," declared Al. "There's no telling what we can do. We're a long way from dead yet. Let's just do our level best, and never admit we're beaten, and, as your uncle Zeke says, keep hoping. It's the fortune of war. We're just soldiers fighting against odds. Let's go to it like soldiers, and let's shake on that!"

And so, with new courage, and new resolve to make the best of whatever happened, and with fresh hope, the three boys shook hands, and felt vastly better. They were to fight for life and existence through the inexorable and terrible Arctic winter, with its long darkness

and awful cold, and there was need enough of courage and hope and determination. But, as Shanks said, no one knows what he can accomplish until he tries.

CHAPTER XX

THE RETREAT TO THE CAVE

THOUGH the height of the storm had passed the wind still blew with persistency, and the snow still swirled and drifted around the tent, and all night the air was filled with the crash and boom of ice. It was disappointing enough that they had been forced to remain in idleness the whole day when there was so much to be done and they had hoped to make so great a beginning on their new cave dwelling.

None of them could sleep, and they spent half the night talking and planning in the yellow, somber light of the seal-oil fire, which one or other of them now and again encouraged with renewed life. And with their plans their courage grew. First it was agreed they should get settled in the cave, that there might be no danger of future gales robbing them of their belongings. Then they would devote themselves to hunting during every daylight hour.

"I think we'd better organize," suggested Al. "We're an army invading Greenland. We've got to entrench and carry on a war against the cold, and for our lives. Shanks has had experience here, and we'll make him general. What do you say, Harry?"

"That's a corking good idea," agreed Harry, enthusiastically. "Shanks is the only one of us that knows what to do. 'General Shanks.' That sounds good."

"I dunno as I'll make much of a general," said Shanks, modestly. "I'll do all the generalling I know how, but I'm afraid 'twon't amount to much. You fellers'll soon know all I know, and maybe more."

"It's General Shanks from this on!" laughed Al. "I'd stand and salute you, General, but there isn't room."

At last they settled to sleep, and while they slept the storm abated. The morning dawned clear, and the sun was shining bright when they awoke.

But when the boys went out of the tent they discovered that a great change had taken place in their dreary world. Where the open sea

had lain there stretched a vast, endless ice field, glittering and shimmering in the sunlight. The driving wind, however, had swept the rocks clean of snow, and for this they were thankful.

"The schooner couldn't get in here now if she tried," remarked Shanks. "The last chance of seein' ner is gone for this year. We may's well make up our minds to that, and we needn't w rry our heads any more about missing her, for we won't. She won't come."

With all their searching they could find but one of the two pairs of blankets that were blown away, and no trace of the down bed, and the cooking kettles were not discovered. The blankets could ill be spared, and Shanks bemoaned the loss of the kettles, which he declared were a necessity.

"We could have done with one of 'em, but we need that to boil the meat," he complained.

"V'hy not use the tea pail for cooking?" suggested Al. "Isn't it big enough? It holds about three quarts."

"What'll we make tea and coffee in, then?" asked Shanks.

"Why not use a tomato can?" suggested Al. "We've got wire and we can make a bale for it."

"'Tain't big enough," Shanks objected.

"Then we can use two of 'em when we have them empty," said Al.

"We can do that," agreed Shanks. "I hadn't thought of it."

The whole of that day was consumed in clearing the loose stones out of the cave and in leveling the floor. Then began the laborious, heavy work of building a substantial stone wall across its front. Fortunately, flat stones a-plenty lay near at hand, and Shanks, as a boy, had assisted in laying stone fences upon a farm. Large stones that required the united effort of the three to lift into place, were built into the bottom, and smaller stones as they ascended.

A gap two feet and a half in width was left in the wall, and when the wall was two and a half feet high, a great flat stone, long enough for the purpose, was placed on top to bridge the gap and unite the walls, and the remaining wall built upon this to the top. This opening was to be the doorway to the cave. On the

evening of the third day the last stone was laid, and the front of the cave completely enclosed.

Then the great ship's tarpaulin, which had served as a tent, was carried in. One edge was thrust out over the top of the wall, and boulders were piled on top of this edge of the tarpaulin to hold it firmly in place upon the wall. Thus it hung like a curtain to cover the whole face of the wall within the cave, and shut out the wind and cold that would otherwise have entered through the unavoidable openings between the stones. It also formed a convenient covering to the doorway that could be easily raised and dropped upon entering or departing.

The boys ached in every muscle, and their fingers were cracked and sore as a result of the unaccustomed work. But when their belongings had been moved into the cave, and the second tarpaulin spread as a floor, and the kettle boiling over Shanks' improvised oil fire, they felt vastly contented and well rewarded. They had a safe retreat now from wind and storm and, above all, they had accomplished

well a task that a short time before would have seemed to them well-nigh impossible. And the accomplishment of duty or the conquering of obstacles brings to one a degree of satisfaction that nothing else can bring.

For a little while it was cold and uncomfortable in the cave, but before the supper of boiled eider duck was ready it was warm enough and, the boys declared, exceedingly cozy.

"It's going to be a jim-dandy place to sleep in," observed Shanks, lifting the cover of the tea pail in which he was cooking the ducks. "I'll be able to stretch out full length, and I ain't done that since we went in the tent, because if I did my feet would stick outdoors."

"It was crowded," laughed Al. "I noticed you were always sleeping with your knees drawn up."

"Couldn't help it," said Shanks, replacing the cover on the pail. "I ain't had a good stretch in so long I've most forgot what it's like."

"This is certainly a corking place!" Harry enthused. "We can get all the trading goods

and the ducks and seal meat in here and still have room to turn around."

"I dunno about the seal meat and ducks," said Shanks. "If we have it kind of warm in here sometimes before the real cold weather comes, they'll get to be kind of unpleasant company. We better bring the trading goods in and store the meat in some of the boxes outside. The meat is frozen now and it will keep good and sweet out there."

"I hadn't thought of that," agreed Harry. "It is the best plan."

"We better make another tick first thing in the morning," suggested Shanks, "and if the snow hasn't drifted over the ducks' nests, fill it with down. We'll need it. And maybe we can kill more ducks. I don't think they have gone yet."

"Let's make the tick tonight," said Al. "We can do it before bedtime, and then it will be ready in the morning, and we'll have enough to do. I want to be hunting every minute we can."

"Well, you've got grit!" exclaimed Shanks admiringly. "I was so dum tired and sore with

the wall building, and so 'tarnal sleepy, I was just thinkin' of bed, but I guess if you've got the grit to tackle the tick, Harry and I have, too!"

"I was thinking of bed, too, but let's get the tick made," agreed Harry.

"It ain't much of a light to work by, but it's the best we're goin' to have," remarked Shanks, when the strips of muslin were measured off.

When they went to the island the following day they found the birds not nearly so numerous as on their earlier visits, though they nevertheless succeeded in adding a few ducks and looms to their store. But they were fortunate in uncovering enough eider down in the ducks' nests among the rocks to fill their tick to its capacity, and when, cold and hungry, they returned to the cave for a delayed dinner late in the afternoon they were well content with the day's work.

"I hate to use the matches," remarked Shanks, as he lighted the fire. "Each of 'em is one less, and I'm scared about what we'll do when they're all gone."

"I wonder, if we take another look around, if we can't find some of our matches?" asked Harry.

"Just as soon as we get warmed up, let's you and I go out and hunt while General Shanks cooks dinner," Al suggested.

Shanks had just called them when Harry gave a whoop, sprang forward, and held up a box of the precious matches. But that was all they ever found, though they searched the rocks diligently many times. And when they examined the matches it was discovered that snow had drifted into the box, and to their deep disappointment the greater part of them were spoiled and useless.

After dinner, and until darkness prevented, they devoted themselves to carrying up from the beach and stowing into the cave the trading goods, which had not yet been removed from the place where the cases had been deposited upon their arrival, and when night came, to their satisfaction more than half the goods were safely under cover.

During the three following days two seals, a half a hundred little auks, and five hares were

killed. Then, suddenly, all of the birds disappeared, and a new and dread silence fell upon the land.

It was on the afternoon of this day, when it was found the birds were gone, that they made an important discovery.

CHAPTER XXI

A GRUESOME DISCOVERY

WHILE Shanks hunted seals along the shore, Harry and Al were hunting hares a mile to the northward of their camp, and a little way from the shore, when they came upon three abandoned igloos built of stones and turf. There was no indication that the igloos had recently been occupied, but this was evidence at least that in years past Eskimos had lived here in winter.

On the rocks a few hundred yards behind the camp was discovered also an old Eskimo burying place. Reposing under the piles of stones were seen the whitened skulls and bones of men. Near to each grave was another pile of bowlders, built also in the form of a grave. Under these bowlders were household utensils and implements of the chase, which had doubtless been the property of the departed hunter during his lifetime.

It was a gruesome and startling discovery.

Neither of the boys had ever looked upon death, and these white bones, in this dead and desolate world, sent a shudder up their spines, and, as they hurried back to camp, their fancy pictured crouching behind every black and silent rock the spectral form of some departed soul.

Shanks was at the cave when they arrived, but he seemed not in the least disturbed by their discovery. Indeed, he proposed at once a visit to the old Eskimo cemetery, hoping to discover useful treasures.

"There'll be time to go," suggested Shanks, "and we may find something there that'll help us out."

"I don't think there'll be anything there," objected Harry, reluctant to look again upon the gaping skulls.

"If you fellers don't want to go, I guess I can find it," Shanks persisted. "I'm goin', anyhow."

"I'll go with you, then," said Al. "We didn't look around. We legged it right back to camp. Of course, there may be something there we can use."

"Then I'll go, too," agreed Harry, with no wish to appear timid.

"The Eskimos don't like t' have their graves mussed up," said Shanks, "and I don't like t' do it, but there's like t' be one thing there we need, and we're goin' t' need it bad bimeby, and there ain't any Eskimos around now t' feel bad and fuss over it if we find anything t' help us out."

"Let's leave the graves alone, then," suggested Harry. "We don't want to make enemies of the Eskimos."

"There ain't any Eskimos around," insisted Shanks, "and there ain't like t' be. I ain't goin' t' worry about them now. Th' folks up there under th' rocks is good and dead, and th' things don't do 'em any good, and I don't think it's wrong t' borrow from 'em what we need. If I thought 'twan't right I wouldn't take 'em."

"If they'll do us any good I see no harm in it, either," said Al. "We're living, and going to have a hard time taking care of ourselves. We can put the things back when we're through with them, if we find anything there we can

use, but I don't believe there is anything that will do us any good."

"If we take anything, and Eskimos come along and find it out, what are they likely to do to us?" asked Harry apprehensively.

"I dunno," said Shanks. "'Most anything, I guess, that comes in their heads. They might take a notion to run their harpoons through us. But I'm goin' t' take th' chance."

And so it came to pass that presently the three were gathered at the old Eskimo graves, and, poking among the boulders, Shanks extracted a stone vessel shaped like a half-moon. It was a peculiar utensil eighteen inches in length, nine inches wide and about two inches deep.

"What is that?" asked Harry as Shanks drew it out.

"That is a good find!" exclaimed Shanks. "Now let's see if there's another, and I reckon there is."

"What use is it to us?" asked Harry, examining it curiously.

"It's an Eskimo lamp," explained Shanks. "That's what I was lookin' for. We've got to

have 'em to keep warm bimeby. That make-shift I made isn't enough. We'd freeze with just that."

Two more of the old stone lamps were uncovered. Then the bowlders were replaced, for nothing else of value was discovered save an ivory harpoon point, which Shanks thrust into his pocket.

"Th' Eskimos would stir up ructions sure enough if they found out we took these things from their dead folks, but, as Al says, I guess we need 'em more than those empty skulls do, and they'll do us more good than they will them," remarked Shanks as they turned back to camp, each bearing an ancient lamp, which was no light burden.

When they were back in the cave again Shanks filled one of the lamps with oil, prepared a new wick for it similar to the one he had previously made, and thereafter used the Eskimo lamp instead of the frying pan.

"We'll have to burn two after awhile," he announced. "When it gets real cold one won't do, and we may need three."

The following morning they arose to find a

blizzard raging and the snow so thick, and so strong a gale blowing, that it was unsafe to venture far away from the cave entrance. The hours of daylight were rapidly shortening, and the nights were growing long. An intense, penetrating, searching cold was settling upon the world. The Arctic winter, with inexorable tread, was upon them.

On the day after they had found the stone lamps, Shanks made a startling announcement: But thirty of the original matches remained, save the few that might be serviceable in the box Harry had recovered, and how many of these would light he was uncertain.

"We can't live the winter out without matches," said Shanks, in the first gloomy moment he had shown in a long while. "We need the matches we got now to fall back on if anything happens."

"Can't we keep a fire burning all the time?" suggested Al hopefully.

"That would use up the oil too fast," objected Shanks. "We'd run out of oil before we could kill any more seals, and then we'd freeze, and couldn't help freezin'. If we had matches

we could let the fire go out while we sleep, and we'll sleep a lot in the long night. Then we'd save the oil, and have enough, maybe, to put us through."

This was a serious matter. They faced a terrible condition, and that night they went to bed with dulled hopes and heavy hearts.

CHAPTER XXII

FIRE STICKS AND CLOTHES

HITHERTO they had been too fully occupied to give much of their attention to the comfort or internal arrangement of their camp. The trading goods had been thrown in a promiscuous pile in a corner. The guns and rifles and some of the other articles had been unpacked, and the empty cases left out of doors and filled with seal meat and birds. The smaller boxes, however, had been taken into the cave. The barrel of traps had also been emptied, and the barrel filled with meat and blubber.

Now, while the storm held them prisoners, they set themselves at once to rearranging and assorting the goods. A box was converted into a low table, and three small boxes into stools to sit upon. The sides and bottom of the two down beds were sewn together to form one large sleeping bag. The blankets were sewn in similar manner to fit between the beds as a

lining for the bag. "You fellows go on with your sewing, and I'll be with you pretty soon," said Al, when they had finished a dinner of boiled seal flippers. "I want to try an experiment. I'm not sure it will work, but it's worth trying. We've got to use every ounce of our brains."

He proceeded to select a board that had formed a part of the cover of one of the boxes, and, taking the ax, split from one edge of the board a strip one inch wide and fifteen inches long. The board was an inch thick, and the stick was therefore an inch square. With his jackknife he now trimmed off the corners, giving the stick a roughly rounded surface. Then he whittled a short, evenly-rounded point on each end.

This completed to his satisfaction, he cut several notches a half inch deep and three or four inches apart into one side of the board. Then, just overlapping the point of each notch, he reamed a round socket into which one of the pointed ends of his stick would fit nicely.

"What you workin' at, anyhow?" asked

Shanks presently, who had been curiously observing Al.

"Just an experiment," answered Al. "I'll show you pretty soon. Cut me a thin strip, like a whiplash, and about two feet long, from the edge of one of the sealskins, won't you?"

"All right," said Shanks. "They're outside, but I ought to bring 'em in, anyhow, and get busy scrapin' 'em and tryin' to soften 'em up."

"I'll fetch 'em in," suggested Al, rising. "I've got to go out for something else."

When Al presently returned with the sealskins he also had a wooden hoop from the top of the barrel which had held the fox traps. This he cut in half, lapped the two halves together, and lashed them into place by wrapping them tightly with copper wire from the spool.

"Here's your strip of sealskin," announced Shanks.

"Thank you," said Al, accepting it, but when he examined it he added, with disappointment, "I don't know that it will work, after all. It's full of oil, and there is hair on one side."

"I can fix that," Shanks offered cheerfully.

"Give her here, and I'll scrape most of the oil out and cut the hair off."

While Shanks scraped and shaved the seal-skin thong, Al reamed out a smooth hollow in the center of a knot, which he had knocked out of a box with the ax. With care he made the surface of the hollow as smooth as possible and large enough to receive one of the pointed ends of the stick.

When the knot was finished to his satisfaction, he picked into fine threads a small piece of rope until he had a handful of the fine, hairy fiber.

"That's good enough, Shanks," Al announced. "Hand over the sealskin and I'll try it out."

Using the barrel hoop as a bow, he attached the sealskin thong as a bowstring, but adjusted it loosely enough to permit a turn of the thong to be taken around the center of the pointed stick. He now placed the handful of fiber on a piece of box cover, and upon this the board into which he had cut the notches, with the fiber partially under one of the notches. With one end of the pointed stick fitted into the

reamed hole at the point of the notch, he pressed it down with the knot held in his left hand, the point at the upper end of the stick fitted into the rounded cavity in the knot.

All of his adjustments made, Al began now to work the bow back and forth. This caused the upright stick to turn rapidly and in a little while smoke began to rise from the place where it rubbed upon the board in the notch.

"It's coming! It's smoking!" he presently exclaimed excitedly.

"Well, by gum!" said Shanks. "If that's goin' to make fire we'll make out without matches!"

But work as he would, Al could not induce the slight spark that he made to ignite the fiber. Harry tried it and Shanks tried it, but with no success, until at length they abandoned the effort and returned to their sewing.

"It should work!" declared Al. "I saw a boy get fire that way once, and he used some raveled string for tinder. I'm going to try again. I won't give up yet."

"Maybe 'twa'n't the same kind of rope," suggested Shanks.

"I don't believe it was," admitted Al. "I remember now it was twine he unraveled, and the strands were very fine and soft, and not as coarse as ours."

"That's the trouble, then," said Shanks, "and we ain't got any of that kind of twine."

They finished their bed, and when the blankets were adjusted between the ticks, surveyed it with satisfaction.

"Now if we had the ticks covered with moleskin cloth they'd be fine," Shanks suggested.

"Can't we do it?" asked Al.

"We need some of it for clothes," said Shanks. "We got to make up clothes out'n the woolen duffel and moleskin right away, too. These we're wearin' are too cold for now, and it'll soon be so we can't poke our heads outside with 'em. Let's see how much cloth we got."

They took it out for inspection, and suddenly Al exclaimed:

"I'll tell you what, fellows! We can take a little piece of the moleskin cloth and cut it up fine on a board with our knives, and then pick it to pieces, to a fuzz. It's fuzzy on one side, anyhow, and it's cotton, and cotton burns easily.

I believe that will make good tinder for our fire sticks! I'm going to try it."

"That does sound reasonable!" said Harry. "Try it out right away!"

"Maybe it'll work, and maybe it won't," observed Shanks dubiously, as Al began to put his plan into execution. "It's worth tryin' out, anyhow."

"It feels damp," said Al, when they had a double handful cut and picked into a soft, fuzzy mass. "I'll try it, though."

But, as Al had predicted, the tinder proved too moist to ignite, and at the end of ten minutes' hard work with the bow the attempt was again abandoned.

"It looks as though it ought to burn," remarked Harry with disappointment. "I'm going to dry some of it out in the frying pan."

"That's a bully idea!" exclaimed Shanks. "Here's the pan. Try drying her out."

Harry spread the tinder in the frying pan, and turned it over and over until it was so thoroughly dried that it began to scorch and blacken. Then he placed some of it in position beneath a notch in the board and began work-

ing vigorously with the bow. Smoke began to curl upward in less than a minute, and a few seconds later he shouted exultantly:

"There it is! There it is!"

Sure enough, a little spot in the tinder was smoldering. It was a small red spot, and it did not blaze, but it was fire. Al stooped down excitedly, seized the tinder in his right hand, and began swinging it back and forth at arm's length, turning his hand at each swing so that the air would be forced against the tinder as his hand passed in each direction. Suddenly a flame burst forth, and Al dropped it, with the triumphant exclamation:

"We've got it! We've got it!"

"Who'd ever have thought of that?" said Shanks. "I never would!"

"That's the way I saw the boy work it when he made fire with sticks," exclaimed Al.

"It's simply great!" exclaimed Harry. "Now we'll be sure of getting fire, even if we haven't any matches!"

"I think we'd better make up a good bunch of tinder and dry it out, like we did that, and wrap it up so it'll keep dry," suggested Shanks.

"That's a fine idea," Al agreed. "We'll just keep our matches, then, for special times."

And so it came about that another of the great and grave problems of their existence was solved successfully.

CHAPTER XXIII

NECESSITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS

NOW came a fortnight of stormy weather with only an occasional day clear and calm enough to permit them to go abroad. Winds rose suddenly, swept land and ice with terrific force, and as suddenly abated, only to break forth again without warning. Sometimes the windstorms were accompanied by snow, and then no movement out of doors was possible. And every day the cold was pinching harder and harder. Frost, mighty monarch of the Arctic wilds, had regained his throne, and entered upon a long reign of despotism.

Winter was upon them, indeed, and they were poorly enough prepared to meet it. Even the woolen underwear and heavy outer clothing supplied them on the ship, and which Harry and Al had looked upon then as quite too warm and clumsy, proved small protection from Arctic winds.

When they went out of doors the leather sea boots they wore froze stiff and hard, and their feet were always cold and in danger of freezing. The necessity of providing themselves with proper and adequate clothing was a problem that called for immediate solution and considerable ingenuity.

"There's only one thing t' do, fellers," said Shanks. "We've got t' make clothes, and do it quick."

"How can we make clothes?" asked Harry helplessly.

"We've got th' makin's," said Shanks, "and that's th' main thing."

Shanks had some knowledge of the use of the needle, but never before had he attempted to cut or fit a garment. But he was willing to try his hand at anything; and with many experiments, and much cutting and trimming and a deal of trying and tedious sewing, in due time each was supplied — it would be an exaggeration to say fitted — with a garment made from the woolen duffel and fashioned after the Eskimo kuletak. It was drawn over the head like a shirt, and had a hood, with a drawstring

around the face of the hood. They were vastly pleased with these woolen kuletars, which proved exceedingly comfortable.

Encouraged by their success, they now made for themselves moleskin kuletars large enough to fit over the ones of duffel. Then each fashioned for himself a pair of moleskin mittens, with two pairs of duffel mittens that would fit one inside the other.

"What's troublin' me most of all now," remarked Shanks, when this much had been accomplished, "is the footgear. Every time I go out my leather boots freeze stiff, and I expect it's the same way with you fellers."

"I believe I've had my feet frosted already," Al announced. "I've been wondering what we would do about footwear. These boots won't do; that's certain."

"Can't we make bigger shoes out of the seal-skins?" Harry suggested. "If we had bigger shoes we could rig up some kind of socks out of the duffel to wear inside them."

"The trouble is, it's a big job to get the oil out'n the skins," Shanks explained. "While they've got oil in 'em they'll freeze hard and

stiff just like our leather boots do, and when they freeze that way they'll make our feet cold and likely to freeze. The skins'll have to be soaked and scraped and pulled a good deal to get the oil out."

"Well, let's go for it," suggested Al. "Even if it does take a good while and a lot of work. We've got to have something for our feet."

A half dozen bars of old-fashioned brown soap had been found in one of the boxes, and after thoroughly scraping the fleshy side of the skins, Shanks smeared them with a thick coating of soap, wet them, and folded them up for a day. Then they washed and scraped the skins and repeated the application of soap, and thus for a fortnight repeated the treatment every second day, each time pulling and rubbing and manipulating the skins, until it came to pass that they became moderately soft and pliable.

"They're about as good as we can make 'em, I guess," Shanks remarked one day. "We'll hang 'em up and let 'em dry out, anyhow, and see."

In the intervals when the boys were not busy

with the skins they made, at Shanks' suggestion, each for himself, a loose pair of knee-high stockings of woolen duffel, and several pairs of short duffel socks, the smallest pair large enough to fit over the feet of the long stockings, and an additional pair large enough to fit over all.

"'Tain't just fair for me to use so much duffel," remarked Shanks, holding up his long stockings. "See the size of that, now! It's 'most as big as both of your'n put together. But see what they've got to cover up!"

They all laughed as Shanks held up his great foot and long leg for inspection.

"It isn't your fault," said Harry, "and your feet are a mighty useful part of you."

"We ought to be out huntin' every minute of daylight that's left," remarked Shanks regretfully. "We can't go till we get our gear fixed, though, for we'd freeze our feet, and then we'd be in trouble."

The sealskins proved not so soft as Shanks had wished, but he declared they would do, when at length they were dried and he took them down for inspection.

"Let's work 'em up some in our hands and that'll soften 'em some more," he suggested.

The short hair which covered the skins was a detriment, but in the end the moccasins they made, with long legs that reached to the knees, proved serviceable enough, though ungainly. And when they were finished and the boys put them on with the duffel stockings and socks, and set out one day to hunt hares, they were found comfortable and warm enough, and another of the difficulties had been conquered.

It was on this day that they came upon the first flock of ptarmigans, or Arctic grouse, they had seen. It was a calm, cloudy day, and the birds tame as they are wont to be on such days, and nineteen were killed before they finally took to the wing and flew away.

"It seems a pity to kill them," remarked Al, holding up one of the snow-white birds.

"Yes," agreed Shanks, "but we can't show much pity for anything in this country, and we've got to have 'em when we can get 'em. It ain't any worse to kill them than to kill chickens you raise, and they make fine eatin'. You'll see."

"I'm not objecting to killing them," said Al. "I did my share of it, and I know we've got to have 'em."

"We'll come back and look for 'em again tomorrow," suggested Shanks, when the twilight warned them that it was time to return to camp.

Now it was discovered that the threads of the newly-made sealskin moccasins were already pulling apart, and the whole evening was occupied in resewing them.

"The thread ain't strong enough to sew skin," observed Shanks. "We need sinew, and I forgot to save any from the seals. We just cut it all up. It'll make a lot of mendin' to do every time we go out."

The following day it stormed, and the day after that it stormed, and it was not until the third day that they were able to go again after ptarmigans, and then no sign of the birds was to be found.

They were hunting up a valley that led back from the sea, and were two miles from camp, Shanks a little distance in advance, when suddenly he stopped, peered cautiously ahead

among the boulders, and then, greatly excited, turned, and, stooping low, came running back toward Harry and Al, motioning them as he ran to drop down to the ground.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EVE OF THE GREAT DARKNESS

"**R**EINDEER!" whispered Shanks, when he ran to where Al and Harry obediently crouched. "They're feedin' down this way! We've got to fetch our rifles! We can get some of 'em if we hurry!"

"How far away are they?" asked Harry, vastly excited.

"Right back here among the big rocks! We've got to hurry!" Shanks admonished.

"Aren't they likely to get scared and leave before we get back?" asked Al, as they dodged away toward camp under cover of the rocks. "Hadn't one of us better stay and watch them?"

"No," Shanks objected, "they're feedin' along down this way, and they might get a sniff of us. The wind is blowin' down from them toward us, and I guess they'll be there when we get back."

It was hard traveling, and though the boys ran wherever possible, a half hour was con-

sumed in reaching camp and exchanging the shotguns for rifles, and another half hour in the return.

"Now, we've got to go easy," Shanks continued presently in an undertone. "We're likely to run on 'em any minute. I've got my mouth fixed for deer's meat, and we've got to have it. Maybe I'd better sneak on ahead and see where they be."

"All right," Al agreed; "Harry and I'll follow."

Presently Shanks, thirty or forty yards in advance, appeared behind a boulder motioning excitedly for them to join him, and when, no less excited, they crawled to his side, he pointed around the boulder and they discovered five beautiful reindeer nibbling upon patches of moss swept naked of snow by the wind.

"We'll each take one," whispered Shanks, "and after we make the first shot, plug at the others the best we can. They ain't over fifty yards away and we ought to get 'em."

In spite of their well-laid plans, but one of the deer fell at the first discharge. Harry



They discovered five beautiful reindeer

and Al were so anxious and so excited that their shots went far wide of the mark. The reindeer, however, after their manner, did not run at once, but stood curiously sniffing at their fallen comrade.

"Now, don't be scared!" admonished Shanks. "We need the meat. Be steady, and aim straight!"

Again they fired, and now three reindeer fell, and the remaining animal fled to join others far up the valley in a wild stampede.

"Four! Four! We've got four!" shouted Harry as they ran forward.

"Now, we'll have enough to eat! Oh, I'm glad!" exclaimed Al.

"And we can have a rest on the seal meat!" Harry exulted.

"We've got plenty of grub now!" declared Shanks gleefully. "They're fine and fat, too. Let's dress 'em before they freeze."

It was nearly dusk before the boys, inexperienced in the art of butchery, had completed their task and set out for camp, each laden with as large a piece of venison as he could well carry, and that night they feasted, indeed.

When they returned the following morning with the sledge to haul the meat to camp, they discovered that during the night animals had been feeding upon it.

"Foxes!" exclaimed Shanks. "They've et close to half a deer, too!"

"Well, they won't get a chance at any more of it," said Al.

"Nope. But, say fellers," suggested Shanks, "let's bring up some of the traps and set 'em here. I know how, and we might as well get some fox skins as not. If we get enough we can make foxskin kuletars for ourselves."

And the others agreed that this was a fine plan.

When the carcasses were hauled to the cave Shanks dexterously removed the sinew from the back of each reindeer, scraped it carefully and hung it to dry in the cave, with the remark:

"They'll make thread that'll hold, and we can fix our footgear now so it won't rip."

Then the meat was cut into convenient pieces and stored in boxes, and the young adventurers felt wealthy, indeed.

"Let's take some of the traps up now and

set 'em," suggested Shanks. "The crew set fox traps the winter I was here before. That's what these were brought for."

"What kind of foxes are they?" asked Harry. "Any silver foxes?"

"Nope. Some whites, mostly blues," Shanks explained, "but they're fine, and worth quite a lot, too."

And so it came to pass that the fox traps were set, and so plentiful were the foxes that scarcely a day passed when the weather permitted them to venture from the cave, that they were not rewarded by at least one beautiful pelt. And during the evenings and stormy days they found time to resew, and this time firmly with sinew, their sealskin boots, and each to make for himself a substantial pair of sealskin trousers and a pair of hareskin socks to wear in the boots, with the hair next the feet.

During the stormy periods much snow fell. A mighty drift lay against the wall that enclosed the front of the cave and, rising above it, shut out every draft of wind and made the cave a snug and warm retreat, indeed, save when the wind blew up from the sea. Then it was found

necessary to pile such things as they had at hand against the tarpaulin door to keep it in place, and even this did not prevent the cold blasts finding their way inside.

Frequently, now, they were compelled, after a heavy snowstorm, to dig their way out through the drift that at these times blocked the entrance. Finally this difficulty was eliminated by building with snow blocks a tunnel about fifteen feet long leading from the doorway. Though it became necessary thereafter in entering or leaving the cave to crawl upon hands and knees through the tunnel, the entrance was never again blocked, and the cold sea winds were effectually shut out.

The tunnel proved so successful that a snow igloo was built, with its entrance opening into the tunnel, and in this venison, seal meat, blubber and birds were stored. With this arrangement the provisions were not only safely sheltered, but could be reached in stormy weather without the necessity of passing beyond the shelter.

With the addition of the tunnel, it was also discovered that the cave could be kept warm

with a considerably smaller expenditure of oil than before it was built. The camp was now, indeed, as Shanks declared one day, "a corking snug place."

During this period of hunting and preparation and improvement the days were shortening with marvelous rapidity. The time had come when the sun passed over but a small sector of the southern horizon, threatening presently to leave them in the gloom of the long night.

With the going of the sun a tremendous and impressive movement in the ice took place. Night and day there was a rumble and roar, like the continuous discharge of heavy artillery, with now and again a startling report, when ponderous masses were loosened from some near-by iceberg and went crashing into the sea. Sometimes it seemed, indeed, that the very universe was being rended and torn asunder.

While this great ice movement was in progress, the most terrific of the early winter storms they had yet experienced swept over land and sea. Snow drove in clouds so dense and suffo-

cating that for two days the boys could not venture beyond the tunnel's mouth, and, joining its tumult to the roar of ice, the wind shrieked and moaned and sobbed among the lonely cliffs.

And when it came to pass that the storm ended, as all storms do, and the ice ceased its roar and tumult, there fell upon the world a new and appalling calm and silence. Day had now become little more than a long twilight, and deadly, withering cold clutched the earth in relentless grasp.

Mystery stalked everywhere. The ghostly icebergs looming against the distant sky spoke of mystery. Every black cliff and crag and rock seemed to shelter some dark secret. Even the snow assumed a ghastly, greenish-white appearance.

With the silence there fell upon the boys an apprehension of impending calamity. A great sorrow seemed to engulf the world, and their hearts carried the burden of the sorrow. And with it came the hopelessness of one drifting to disaster, and impotent to save himself.

"Al," said Harry one day when they were

returning from their fox traps, "I'm afraid—afraid of something I can't see—something invisible and intangible—I don't know what. It seems to me almost as though the world were coming to an end. It's foolish, I know, but I can't help it."

"So am I afraid," Al confided. "An awful feeling depresses me—I can't describe it—it's just that my heart doesn't seem to beat right, and I feel sometimes as though I'd have to cry—or choke."

CHAPTER XXV

A CURE FOR DISCONTENT

AND so the twilight faded, and the veil of the long night fell upon the desolate and dreary world to plunge it into a still drearier period of perpetual darkness. It came to the boys as a season of mental as well as physical readjustment, as it always does to dwellers in these far Arctic lands.

Following the hurried and busy period of preparation for provision against the cold and for physical comfort, the silence of the twilight inevitably brings with it the heavy-hearted sense of disaster near at hand, of which Al and Harry had complained. But when the night at length settles, the mind gradually adapts itself to the reality, the brain clears, and the load of sorrow is lifted from the heart.

So it was with the boys. They became more cheerful, and during a moonless period that followed the twilight busied themselves with countless tasks about the cave. The twenty-

four hours were divided into two equal divisions of time, the twelve that would have been day had the sun shone, and the twelve hours of night. In order that they might retain as regular habits as possible they called the former "day," and treated it as such, though it was as dark as ever a night could be, and the other twelve hours they set aside for sleep and rest.

There was much time now for idleness and for speculation. What had been the fate of the *Sea Lion*? What would be their own position when light returned and summer came again? How had Billings and Manuel fared? How were their friends at home? Were Harry and Al mourned as dead? What, indeed, had their people thought of their disappearance?

"I wonder," remarked Al, as they talked of these things one day, "whether any one found your car, Harry, or whether it is still standing in that deserted road where we left it?"

"Someone probably found it—some farmer, likely," said Harry, "and hauled it into his barn. I've been troubled a great deal, since there has been time to think of things, about

the man we ran down. I hope he wasn't badly injured."

"I don't believe he was. He couldn't have been, for they picked him up and led him away. There's no use worrying about it, anyhow," advised Al. "Worrying won't do any good, and we've got our work cut out, and a good plenty of it, too. It's going to be a big contract to take care of ourselves until we're found and rescued."

"You're right, of course," Harry agreed "but I've thought sometimes how selfish and cowardly I was. I don't think I'll ever be like that again. All I thought about that day was to get away out of reach, where the officers wouldn't catch me. I really didn't think much about the man, or how badly he was injured, except that if he was badly hurt I would be severely punished for it. I don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't been with me. Sometimes I think I'll never want to drive a car again."

"Oh, yes you will," soothed Al. "But it will be a long while before you have a chance, I'm afraid. That *was* a dreary night! And

something has been happening to us ever since!"

"I wouldn't risk *my* neck in one of them gasoline thingamajigs," remarked Shanks, who was stretched full length upon his back, his yellow hair, which had not been trimmed since he left New Bedford, sticking out around his cap in a tangled mass. "I never was in one of 'em in my life, and, by jiminy, I never will be!"

"They're all right if you don't run them too fast," said Al. "When we get home, if we ever do, we'll have to take you for a ride in one."

"Nope. Not me," and Shanks shook his head. "None of it for me. They're dangerous if they don't make over two knots an hour. I saw one of 'em take fire and blow up, once. Standin' still, she was, too. They're dangerous just standin' still. A ship's good enough for me. I always intend to keep where it's safe, like we be here. I don't want to take any chance."

"I don't think we're very safe here," grinned Harry, "going adrift on ice and all sorts of things happening. It's a lot more dangerous than riding in automobiles."

"Nope," insisted Shanks. "A feller can do something here to help himself if he gets in a tight place, but he ain't got a chance in one of those things."

"We'll see," Al laughed. "We'll get you out for a ride some time, and you'll want to ride faster than we do, and you won't be able to keep out of them after that."

"Nope!" Shanks insisted. "Not much! You won't get me into one of 'em."

"How long ago that seems," mused Harry, "and how unreal the old life seems to me. Sometimes I wonder if all that didn't happen in another world, and if I died, and then came to life again here."

There was small opportunity for exercise, and the boys chafed under restraint. Several times they set out up the valley, determined to visit their fox traps, but the trail was so rough, and in the dim light of the stars they were compelled to pick their way so slowly and carefully over the rocks, that always they turned back far short of their goal, and the traps remained unattended and uncared for.

Enforced idleness bred petulance and dis-

content and ill temper. The most trivial thing caused resentment and sometimes led to ugly words. Even Shanks had brief periods when Harry and Al could do nothing to please him, and Harry and Al engaged in more than one violent quarrel that stopped just short of blows. The confinement, the endless darkness, the brutal, pitiless land itself, were eating into their souls. They needed action to draw their thoughts from themselves. Idleness, as nothing else, breeds discontent and discord.

"Fellers," said Shanks one day after the three had indulged in a dispute and for an hour had not spoken, each treating the others with high disdain and as though they were the most contemptible people in the world, "Fellers, we've got to get busy at something or we'll be fightin', and no foolin' about it, bimeby. We're just hangin' around this cave, and doin' nothin' but hate ourselves and takin' it out on the other feller, till we've got to thinkin' the other fellers are the meanest sort of dirt."

Neither Harry nor Al replied.

"Come, now, fellers," continued Shanks after a short silence, "let's be human and de-

cent. There ain't anything the matter with us except havin' nothin' much to do. We've got to live together, and we might as well make up our minds to agree and have the best time we can. We're partners here, and we've got to keep on bein' partners for a spell yet. The moon'll soon be light enough so we can get around, and then things'll be all right with us I guess. What's the use of bein' mad at each other all the time?"

"I'm willing enough if you fellows will act decent," said Al sullenly.

"You're the onc makes trouble every time," blurted Harry spitefully, "and Shanks isn't much better."

"That ain't the way to make up," Shanks broke in. "I know I've been as cross as a saw-buck, and I admit it. Let's just forget all about that, and start in like we were before it got dark."

"We'd have been all right if you hadn't let Billings and Manuel steal the boat and the grub," Harry retorted. "We might have found the ship, and we'd have had decent things to eat, anyhow."

"I guess I was some to blame for not keepin' an eye on them fellers, knowin' what they were," Shanks admitted magnanimously. "I've been a pretty big sort of grouch, too. By hickory, I'm ashamed of grouchin', though."

"Shanks, you're a brick," and Al began to laugh. "We've been a lot of chump kids. Come on, Harry! Let's wake up out of this and be reasonable again."

"All right," Harry smiled sheepishly.

"Shake on it!" and Shanks, grinning in his old, good-natured way, grasped the hands of the others. "Say, now, fellers, I'll tell you what: Let's see if we can't get the deerskins in some kind of shape and make kuletars out of 'em."

"Fine!" agreed Al. "It'll get us busy and give us something to think about."

"Why didn't we think of it before?" exclaimed Harry. "There's something to do if we only look for it."

And so it came to pass that the first severe strain of the isolation and long darkness was broken. The deerskins were brought forth, treated on the fleshy side with soap and water,

and then folded and laid away for a day or two to await further treatment.

"Fellers," announced Shanks, when they had applied the soap and water to the last skin, "we'll celebrate with a treat. We've got two strips of bacon left, and I'm goin' to fix up a bang-up dinner of bacon and deer's liver, and a can of corn, and coffee. We're down to the last can of coffee, though."

"You make my mouth water!" declared Harry enthusiastically. "Can't we have some hardtack, too?"

"I reckon we can," grinned Shanks. "We've got about twenty pounds left."

"That's great!" exclaimed Al. "I'm tired of eating nothing but meat."

"All right," said Shanks, taking the tea pail and ax. "I'll get some ice to melt for the coffee, and you fellows get the liver and other stuff ready."

"Gee Whitaker!" bellowed Shanks from the mouth of the tunnel a moment later. "Fellers, look at this!"

Al, with Harry in his wake, excited by Shanks' call, hurried out on their hands and

knees and found Shanks still kneeling in the tunnel entrance.

"Hurry, fellers!" shouted Shanks.

"Here we are! What is it?" asked Al excitedly.

"Look! Look at that!" exclaimed Shanks.

"Well, get out of the way. We can't see through you!" urged Al.

"I ain't much like winder glass," Shanks admitted as he passed out, and Al and Harry followed.

CHAPTER XXVI

WONDERS OF THE ARCTIC NIGHT

THE whole world was ablaze. Mighty tongues of fire swept the sky from horizon to zenith. Some of them were dazzling white, some flaming yellow, others dark orange, fiery red, or deep purple. The cliffs, the ice fields, the distant icebergs, were aglow with the mystic light. It was a stupendous, overpowering display. The wonderful and magnificent magnitude of it all impressed the boys as little less than fearful.

"Northern lights," remarked Shanks presently "I never seen 'em so bright before, though. Ain't it great!"

It was "great," indeed. They all hurried back into the cave to don warmer clothing, and then for an hour paced up and down beneath the glow of the aurora borealis, until at last it faded, to leave the dead and frozen world more cheerless and somberly oppressive than ever.

But the meal that Shanks prepared was

cheerful enough, and while the boys enjoyed it they discussed the marvelous beauty of the aurora, and many things.

"I wonder if we'll ever get away from here — and get home," suggested Harry at last.

"Oh, I reckon we'll get out some time next summer," cheered Shanks.

"It seems as though we'd been here for years and years," Harry continued. "I can't help wondering sometimes whether I'll — ever see my mother again, and — whether she's feeling badly about me. I can't help worrying about things — about the possibility of never getting away from here."

"I ain't worryin' about that any to speak of," Shanks encouraged. "Uncle Zeke always says: 'Keep a stiff backbone, lad, when you get in a tight place. Half the storms we're lookin' for never hit us. 'Tain't worth while reefin' your sails just because you think a gale might come,' says he; 'the feller that does that never gets anywheres much. So long as there's a good sailin' breeze,' says he, 'keep your canvas spread and don't worry.' We've got a snug enough place to hang out, and plenty of grub,

even if there ain't much custard and pie. The *Sea Lion's* goin' to show up some day next summer when the ice clears, and pick us up, and we're all right while we're waitin'."

"But the *Sea Lion* may have been sunk, and if she has been, what will become of us?" protested Harry.

"And then again, maybe she wa'n't nipped," insisted Shanks, with his never-failing optimism. "Most likely she's lyin' up snug and safe for the winter in some good harbor, and maybe not very far from here either. I've got a hunch that's where she is, and—" Shanks began to laugh uproariously, "like as not the old man and the crew is wearin' crape for us this minute, thinkin' we've gone to Davy Jones' locker never to return any more. It makes me laugh to think of Spuds moppin' the tears out'n his eyes with the dish towel."

And Shanks laughed so heartily at the picture of Spuds weeping that Harry and Al perforce laughed with him.

"If we only had the boat Billings and Manuel took, perhaps we could find the *Sea Lion*, when the ice goes out," suggested Harry.

"But we ain't got it, and so there's no use thinkin' about what we can't do," and Shanks began to sing:

Who cares for the drift and floe?
Who cares for the wind and snow?
 We ain't got a boat,
 And we can't go afloat,
So let the blizzards blow.

There ain't no use bewailin',
Just 'cause we can't go sailin'.
 We're snug as can be,
 My mates, you and me,
So let's just quit complainin'.

And so they soothed and lulled themselves into a degree of contentment, and the days passed cheerfully enough. The moonlight came, and the fox trapping was resumed. It was a vast relief to be free again to tramp up the desolate, rock-bound valley.

But it was a new world—this world of the moonlight—a world of mystery that never could seem quite natural or real. Where the sea once lay stretched endless ice fields, broken by mighty, towering bergs, weird and spectral

in the indescribable greenish-yellow light of the Arctic moon. Black and ominous were crags and cliffs rising out of limitless snow reaches. Dark shadows moved stealthily over ice and snow like crawling, skulking gnomes, seeking ever to hide themselves, but ever baffled in their quest for shelter.

Then came the waning moon, and again the world was engulfed in the blackness of perpetual night, with its old, depressing effect. It was harder now to fight away the all but overpowering hopelessness that sought to crush the souls of the three boys.

Enforced confinement to the short walks they were enabled to take adjacent to the cave grew monotonous. The reindeer skins were worked and manipulated, pulled and stretched and beaten, until they were deemed pliable enough, and then shaped and sinew-sewn into kuletars, and in the increasing and tightening cold proved vastly more comfortable than the cloth garments. With this to busy them, the depressing influence of the dark period was lightened to no small degree.

"Do you know what day this is?" asked Al,

who had taken upon himself the duty of keeping a record of passing time.

"No, what day is it?" said Harry.

"Christmas eve!" announced Al, and then, after a moment's silence: "I wonder—what they're doing at home. I wonder if they're missing me much—and—and if I've spoiled their Christmas!"

"Supposin' we don't bother our heads with that," Shanks broke in cheerily. "'Twon't help them or us, and we don't want to be gettin' homesick over Christmas. Let's keep Christmas ourselves, and have a fine old time!"

"What can we do to have a fine time?" asked Harry skeptically.

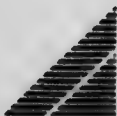
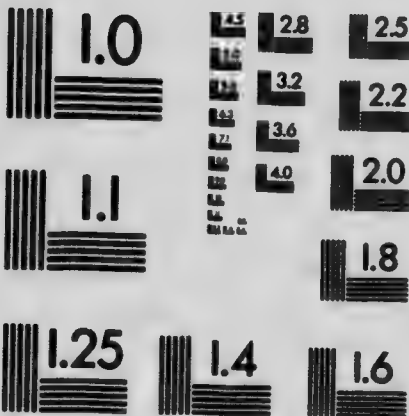
"We can have a big feed," suggested Shanks. "We'll have to cut out givin' presents, and decoratin' our humble but happy home with green things, and there won't be any candy and cake and pies and puddin's worth mentionin'; but I'm dietin' along that line anyhow. We can fix up a corkin' good feed, though. What do you say, fellers?"

"I say you're a brick to think of it!" said Al, enthusiastically. "It's a corking idea!"



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"What'll we have?" asked Harry, no less enthusiastic than Al.

"We ain't got a big meanyou to pick from," said Shanks, "but we'll just fix up what we've got in a new way. What do you fellers say to a duck stew with some hard bread in it?"

"That would be great!" exclaimed Al. "And we can put water enough in it to make plenty of broth, and use the broth for soup."

"We've got some canned tomatoes and corn yet," continued Shanks.

"It's Christmas! Let's have 'em!" broke in Harry. "And coffee!"

"And prunes for dessert!" suggested Al. "They're just great the way you cook 'em, Shanks!"

"I just stew 'em," grinned Shanks. "I guess it's the Arctic appetite makes 'em go good."

"No it isn't," Al protested. "The way I always had 'em the juice was thin and watery, but you have it thick and syrupy, and as sweet as honey."

"I guess it's just the stewing 'em a long

while," explained Shanks. "Spuds always puts sugar in 'em, and lets 'em boil just long enough to mellow 'em up. Mother showed me how. I let 'em stew slow for four or five hours, and watch 'em so they won't burn. Then they're good and sweet without sugar, and a dum sight better'n Spuds' way. They'd be better yet if I could soak 'em over night, but they'd only freeze up solid if I tried it here."

The preparation of the feast was indeed a diversion, though thoughts of home intruded upon the boys in spite of themselves. Nevertheless, they enjoyed themselves mightily. Shanks made an eider duck stew, into which he broke some of their precious hardtack and, to improve the flavor, some small pieces of bacon were included. The last can of tomatoes, and the last can of corn but one, served as vegetables, with a big dish of stewed prunes for dessert. Of course there was coffee—and that was a great treat now, for they were nearly at the end of their supply.

"Two more ducks, two looms, three batches of prunes, one can of corn, and about coffee enough for four times, and we'll be down to

straight deer's meat and seal meat," Shanks announced, after they had feasted. "There ain't much hardtack left, and the bacon'll only hold out for half a dozen times. But the January moon'll soon be along, and close after that we'll see a little of God's good daylight and then maybe we'll kill some more ptarmigans."

"But this was *some* feed we had today, anyhow," declared Harry, with the satisfaction that follows a good meal.

"Yes," agreed Al, no less contented, "and we'll forget about the things we haven't got, and think of the time when we'll have daylight and the sun again. I've almost forgotten what sunshine is like."

They were out, an hour later, walking up and down a level platform of rock that extended from the tunnel entrance to the ice barrier that lined the shore of the frozen sea, when they were startled by another weird and impressive wonder of the Arctic night. Suddenly the heavens blazed forth with streaks of flaming fire shooting in every direction. It was as though thousands upon thousands of

giant rockets had been discharged simultaneously, or a tremendous mine of rockets had been ignited.

"Shootin' stars!" exclaimed Shanks. "No end to 'em!"

For nearly ten minutes the meteoric shower continued. Then it gradually diminished until at length the last flame faded, to leave the blue-black sky blacker than ever, and its million stars shining like points of polished metal, more pitilessly cold.

Time dragged wearily past. Storms swept the ice fields and desolate, frozen, snow-bound land. Moonlight came again, and faded. The night pinched the minds of the boys, and sometimes in spite of good resolutions to keep their temper and bear with one another, they became petulant and quarrelsome, as men do under such conditions.

Their fox traps during the moonlight yielded well, and the beautiful pelts were accumulating, but the young trappers paid well for their foxes in frost-bitten noses and cheeks. The interior of their cave was thickly encrusted now with frost and rime. Finally it came to

pass that no provisions remained save venison, seal meat, tea, and salt.

To vary their diet the boys resorted sometimes to foxes caught in the traps, and indeed grew to look upon stewed fox as a toothsome and appetizing dish. Once they shot a great snow-owl, discovered sitting upon a rock near the tunnel entrance. Shanks stewed it, and the boys declared its flesh as good as chicken.

The fat from the reindeer had been a luxury, but that, too, was gone, and as a special treat they indulged from time to time in small portions of seal blubber. Their systems craved the fat, but the end of their supply was alarmingly near, and Shanks at length decided that no more must be eaten or they would be without oil for the lamps before the time should arrive when they could resume seal hunting and replenish their supply.

This was the condition when, one day, a faint glow in the southeastern sky was discovered, the first noonday hint of returning day. The boys were out upon the ice foot when the discovery was made, and it thrilled them with its promise of life.

"Jiminy Christmas!" exclaimed Shanks as the brief light settled into darkness again, and they retired to the cave. "It almost makes me feel like cryin' to see that, and know that the good old sun is shinin' back there somewheres. I guess I would have dropped a tear or two, only I knew they'd freeze, and tears hurt a feller's eyes when they freeze on 'em."

"I felt that way too," confessed Harry. "Oh, won't it be great to see the sun again!"

"Won't it!" echoed Al, adding after a moment's thoughtful silence: "I was thinking how we take everything for granted—back home. We have the sunshine every day, and we don't think of what it would be if we never had it."

"And down there we have plenty of wood and coal, and don't have any worry about blubber," said Shanks. "First light we have, we've got to hustle and get more seals somehow. We're goin' too low on oil."

"I never would have thought people could exist the way we're living," remarked Harry. "Things we think we must have to live, at home, would be luxuries here. One thing I'm

sure of. I'll never again find fault with anything I have to eat, or anything else—that is, if we ever do get home. I'll remember this winter I spent up here in the Arctic."

"That's the way I feel, too," Al agreed. "Do you know, life and school, and what I'm going to do in the world, seem a good deal more important than they used to."

"I never did take things seriously," said Harry. "The most I thought of was fun, and a good time. All that looks so trivial, doesn't it, up here? I'm going to do my best to be of some account, after this."

"That's hoss sense," remarked Shanks. "Uncle Zeke says everybody can be of some account if he wants to, one way or another, if it's just helpin' some other feller, like I helped Spuds; and if a feller does the little things that he can do the best he knows how, he'll be doin' some big thing after awhile. He says nobody ever got to doin' the big things that didn't begin doin' little things, first, and then nobody got to the big things unless he done the little things first-class and for all that he was worth."

"I guess your uncle Zeke's right," said Al. "It's hard to do the little things sometimes, and we're apt to slight them. I have to mow the lawn at home, and I always hated it, and sometimes I didn't half do it. I'm just aching to get a chance at that lawn now, and to see the good green grass again."

"That's talkin'!" exclaimed Shanks. "Jiminy Christmas, but I'd give my eyes to see the color of grass! I've been thinkin' folks never know how good things are they've got until there's a time comes when they lose 'em, or can't get 'em any more."

"That's so," said Al. "I've been feeling like a blind person up here, and I was wondering last night how the world would seem to any one who had been blind all his life and all at once got his sight. If it was down in God's country that he got his sight, I believe that just the grass and trees and flowers and the sun and sky would open to him like heaven, and be too beautiful, almost, to seem real. And we take it all as a matter of course! Oh, I'll appreciate it all, though, when I get back!"

"Which comes around to our gettin' down to

hardpan right here," suggested Shanks, "and bein' thankful and enjoyin' deer's meat and seal meat and a cave that's good enough, and not growlin' and grouchin' about what we ain't got. We might be a dinged sight worse off than we be—"

"What's that?" broke in Harry. "Did you hear that noise?"

They sprang to their feet, listening. There was a long, wailing howl, followed by other howls.

"Wolves!" exclaimed Shanks. "A pack of Arctic wolves!"

The howls continued, and a few moments later Shanks lifted the tarpaulin to look out, but immediately dropped it and stepped back. He had discovered a dark object in the tunnel, moving toward the cave. An instant later something pushed against the tarpaulin.

CHAPTER XXVII

SAVAGE VISITORS

THE tarpaulin lifted, and a dark face, surrounded by frost-encrusted fur, appeared. An Eskimo crawled into the cave. Then came another and another, until five dusky, fur-clad, frost-covered savages had entered. So unexpected was the arrival that the three boys stood dumb with surprise, until one of the Eskimos began speaking rapidly in his own tongue, and presently Shanks, through his limited knowledge of Eskimo, and assisted by signs, understood.

"They're hungry!" he exclaimed. "They ain't had anything to eat for three days!"

The Eskimos were invited to sit down, and the three boys, highly excited, hurriedly brought in from the snow igloo and set before the visitors some pieces of frozen seal meat, and then put a kettle of ice over a lamp to melt for tea. The Eskimos, without ceremony or parley, turned their attention to the frozen raw

meat, and ate so eagerly and so rapidly that more of the seal meat was presently required, and still more, before the vast appetite and hunger was at length satisfied. Then came hot tea, which was drunk no less voraciously than the seal meat had been eaten, until finally the Eskimos said:

"Tima. Nikomik." Enough. Thank you.

"Jiminy Christmas, but they were hungry!" exclaimed Shanks.

It was a novel experience for the boys. They had never before seen men eat as these men ate. An end of a large piece of meat held in the left hand was taken between the teeth. With a sheath knife in the right hand the mouthful was cut off at the lips, and this continued until the whole piece was consumed. And how they could eat the black, fishy-flavored meat raw was quite beyond understanding. As for the three boys it was none too palatable when thoroughly cooked.

But the Eskimos enjoyed the feast, and they were as happy as children, for to them it was a feast indeed. But Eskimos are the happiest and best contented people in the world. They

are satisfied with their condition, and they wish for nothing more than they have, though every day of their life is a struggle for food and existence.

In worldly things and comforts the poorest of our folk in civilization are well off as compared with Eskimos, but none of us is ever satisfied. We of civilized countries always believe our neighbors happier than ourselves, and in so believing we forget to be happy. No matter how much of the good things of the world we may have, we wish for something more, or something different, and it is scarce possible to find among us a truly contented man or woman. But it is not so with the Eskimos, though the privations of their life are manifold. Perhaps it is because in their world they see none better off than themselves, and contentment is largely a matter of comparison.

Nevertheless, for ourselves, a healthy discontent is a good possession. If men and boys were contented with their lot they would never rise to better things. The discontent that breeds ambition, and spurs us with desire to make a higher place for ourselves, and leads

to accomplishment, is God-given. This, with vim and grit behind it, is what makes men great.

The Eskimos were willing enough to talk, and when they had finished their feast explained that they had set out from their winter camp to the northward six days before. For three days storms had prevented their traveling, and while they lay idle in a snow igloo they had consumed all their provisions.

They had come to the old camp which the boys had discovered a mile to the northward, to hunt walrus, but before they had reached the igloos the dogs sniffed the cave, and by their eagerness to continue the men had no doubt another hunting party was camped near, and permitted the dogs to bring them on. The howls which Shanks had supposed to have been wolf howls were the cries of the hungry dogs as they approached, for the howl of the Eskimo dog is so like that of the wolf that one can scarce be distinguished from the other.

The hunters were to go out upon the ice opposite the cave, and hoped to kill some walrus and seals, and it was evident that, after the

hospitable manner of their own people, they made no question that they would be quite welcome to stop with the boys in the cave.

"They won't stay long, fellers," explained Shanks, when he had, after much parley, succeeded in interpreting the intentions of the visitors. "We'll be packed in while they do stay, though. And we'll have t' feed their dogs. They haven't been fed in three days."

"Of course we'll have to do all we can to help them," said Harry.

"And feed the dogs at once," agreed Al. "The poor beasts must be famished."

There were twenty-two dogs in the three teams, and they were indeed famished, and when a quantity of seal meat, cut in pieces, was taken out, the ravenous, wolf-like creatures were in a frenzy of eager excitement. They leaped and yelped, and strained at their traces, and snapped and snarled at one another so viciously, that their owners were compelled to beat them down with long whips until they cringed and whined. But when the meat was thrown to them they were up again in a jiffy

in a wild, tumbling, snarling mass, and in a moment the last morsel was gulped down.

It was evident that the visitors were to give themselves no rest, and that they were to go upon the ice at once, in search of walrus. The light of the moon was growing, and they must needs take advantage of every hour, for soon enough it would fade, and hunting in the Arctic night is so hazardous that only when driven by the direst stress will the Eskimos venture upon the sea ice in the darkness of the moonless periods.

The five, when the dogs had eaten, held a brief conference among themselves, and presently two of them set out toward the sea, while the other three returned to the cave with the boys.

"Them fellers that went out on the ice are named Sipsook and Matuk," Shanks explained. "I guess they've gone t' see if they can find any walrus or seals, and the rest are goin' t' wait here with us till they come back."

"What are the names of these men?" asked Harry.

"I'll find out," and Shanks inquired of each

his name, which in high good humor they repeated until Shanks had learned them — Kuglutook, Chevik, and Korluk.

"I never can remember those names," declared Harry.

"Strange soundin' words, ain't they?" observed Shanks.

"Will they take the dogs with them when they go out to hunt walrus, or leave them here till they return?" asked Al, expectantly.

"Take 'em. But they'll come back here after the hunt," interpreted Shanks, after inquiry. "They want us to go, too."

"That's great!" exclaimed Al. "I wanted to go and see how they hunt, but I was afraid they wouldn't want us with them."

"It's going to be cold out on the ice," warned Harry. "If they're likely to be more than two or three hours I don't think I'll go."

"Oh, come on!" urged Al, enthusiastically. "You won't mind it. It's worth getting cold to hunt with Eskimos."

Further inquiries and interpretation on the part of Shanks brought forth the information that if walrus were plentiful they might be

gone several hours. If Sipsook and Matuk reported open water too far out for safe hunting, they would continue south to other hunting places.

"I hope they'll find good huntin' here," added Shanks. "If they do, I'm goin', but if they have to go farther south I don't think any of us better go."

An hour and a half elapsed before Sipsook and Matuk returned with the exciting report that they had seen many walrus, and that there was open water and a good place to hunt. They were ready at once, and renewed the invitation to the boys to join them.

"I'm going!" announced Al, keen for the experience.

"So be I!" said Shanks. "Come along, Harry."

"I'm afraid they'll stay too long, and it's too cold," objected Harry. "One of us should stay to look after the place and keep it warm, anyway, and I'd rather do it."

"You'll miss it!" urged Al.

"I'll miss getting frozen stiff," said Harry.

"All right. Good-bye," called Al and

Shanks, as they hurried after the Eskimos, who were impatiently waiting.

Al was given a place on Kuglutook's sledge, and Shanks on Sipsook's, while Matuk and Korluk occupied the third one. The drivers broke the sledges loose from the snow, and with much shouting at the dogs away they flew down the ice foot, and out upon the sea ice, where, with marvelous dexterity, the sledges were guided between great ice hummocks.

Straight out over the frozen sea they went, and they had traveled nearly two miles when in the moonlight black patches on the white could be seen in the distance ahead. This was water, and a little way from its edge the dogs were finally halted.

Walrus were swimming about among loose pans and pieces of floe, and, eager to begin shooting, Al and Shanks drew their rifles from the cases, but were warned that their report of guns would frighten the walrus before they could reach of the harpoons, and reluctantly they returned the rifles to the cases.

The Eskimos, with the menace of their long whips, now made the dogs lie down, and, pass-

ing the whips to Al and Shanks, directed them to keep the animals quiet.

No time was lost by the hunters. Arming themselves with harpoons and lances they left the main ice, and, springing from one piece of floating ice to another, secured substantial footing upon a pan in the midst of the diving walrus. This passage from the main ice to the pan was a perilous undertaking, for many of the smaller pieces upon which they sprang were so small that they would not have borne a man's weight had he hesitated for an instant before passing on to the next, and a slip or misstep would have resulted in a plunge into the black water, which would almost certainly have proved fatal.

The boys watched the hunters with breathless anxiety. It was an amazing feat of daring and dexterity, and a wonderful exhibition of iron nerves. And it was not until the last man had safely reached the pan that the boys breathed freely.

"Jiminy Christmas!" exclaimed Shanks. "I expected to see one of them fellers go down! It most made my hair stand straight! Least-

ways, it would have, if my hair wa'n't so long it couldn't."

"I wouldn't take a chance like that for anything in the world!" Al declared.

"They've got it all over us fellers for taking chances," said Shanks. "You wouldn't see me taking any chances like that! No, sir-ee! Not me!"

Once upon the pan, with no thought that they had done anything unusual, and, doubtless, with no appreciation of the peril through which they had passed, the Eskimos stationed themselves near the edge of the ice, and with harpoons poised waited motionless as statues.

Presently a walrus rose close to Matuk. Instantly his harpoon shot forth and was buried deep in the great black body. A heavy iron point fitted upon a harpoon shaft was quickly driven into the ice, a turn of the harpoon line was taken around the shaft, and the struggling animal was secure. Watching every opportunity, Matuk tightened the line inch by inch, and nearer and nearer drew his prey, until at length it was within reach of his lance, and with a few deft thrusts he dispatched it.

In the meantime the other hunters had come to Matuk's assistance. Two slits were cut into the neck of the victim, lines were passed through the slits and made fast, and, improvising a pulley, the carcass was warped upon the pan, the meat cut into pieces of convenient size, and by means of small pans rafted to the main ice.

This had hardly been accomplished when suddenly Sipsook began shouting to the others and pointing landward. Immediately the Eskimos were in a state of frenzied excitement. The dogs were whipped into line. Kuglutook's sledge was nearest the boys, and he called to them to jump upon it. They had scarcely time to do so when away it shot in mad flight after the others, the drivers yelling wildly at the dogs and whipping them to their utmost speed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NIGHT HUNT AND ITS PERILS

"**W**HAT'S the matter? What has happened?" Al asked, in bewilderment, for there was no visible cause for the evident panic which had seized the Eskimos.

Kuglutook, whipping the dogs and urging them forward at the top of his voice, did not understand, and even though he had understood was too excited and occupied even to remember the presence of his passengers.

"I never saw anybody act this way before!" Shanks exclaimed, clinging wildly to the sledge, which threatened to overturn as it swung around the sharp corner of an ice hummock, and skidded sidewise. "It looks like they'd all gone crazier'n doodle bugs!"

Presently, in response to repeated inquiries from Shanks, Kuglutook found time between his shouts at the dogs to interject the information that the ice had "shadacood."

"That means," explained Shanks, between

bumps of the sledge, "that the ice we're on has broke loose from the main pack, and we've gone adrift again, like we did when we got lost from the *Sea Lion*! It happens sometimes to th' Eskimos huntin' walrus in winter, and when I was here before I heard of some gettin' lost that way."

Upon reaching the edge of the ice nearest shore the Eskimos turned the dogs alongside the widening strip of black water, following it to the southward. There were places where the distance between the floe and shore ice was not above ten yards, but it might as well have been a mile. It was equally impassable.

The farther they went, the greater became the excitement of the Eskimos, until at the end of two or three hours it had reached almost a frenzy. Al and Shanks sat dumb and for a long while quite overcome by a sense of utter helplessness. At length Shanks remarked:

"It looks as though we're sure enough caught, and no gettin' away."

"Yes," agreed Al. "It must be pretty bad, from the way the Eskimos act."

"Well," said Shanks resignedly, "it ain't so

bad when it comes sudden, like it will to us if we don't get off'n here."

"Let's—let's don't think of that," and Al shuddered. "It's too horrible to think of. Let's just think we *will* get off."

"Yes, let's do," Shanks seconded gamely. "Uncle Zeke says 'never give up and never be a quitter.' Al, you got the right kind o' grit!"

"The ice might drive ashore, the way it did before," suggested Al, hopefully.

"Jiminy, how the Eskimos do take on!" said Shanks after another silence. "I guess there's reason enough for it, too. We can't keep this up very long, seems to me. The dogs'll give out, and we'll freeze out here."

Even now the dogs were showing signs of tiring. With the utmost effort on the part of the drivers they could no longer be beaten into a faster gait than a slow trot, for they had already traveled many miles up and down and across the floe since the discovery of the parted ice. But still on and on they went. Sometimes a driver would fancy he saw a white bridge across the river of black water, and at such times he would shout at the dogs and whip

them mercilessly forward in a fresh burst of frenzied hope. At such times the boys' hearts would beat high in expectancy. But always the end was the same—there was no bridge.

With growing desperation of the drivers the sledges separated, each driver dashing away by himself without regard to the ability of the others to keep his pace, and at length the two boys discovered that the other sledges had faded wholly from view in the hazy light of the setting moon, for Kuglutook's team had the extra burden of Al and Shanks.

But still Kuglutook urged the dogs forward. He was growing hoarse with his shouting at them, which seemed to be quite a useless expenditure of energy, for neither whip nor shouts at length could induce them to increase their pace above a walk. When the gait fell to a walk the boys and the Eskimo relieved the sledge of their weight, to run by its side, and thus by lightening the load to some degree, increase the speed.

"It's good to have a chance to walk," said Shanks. "It'll help us get warmed up."

"I wonder," said Al, his voice displaying

discouragement, "if this is the end of it all. We can't keep going much longer, and if we stop for long we'll freeze to death."

"Not yet," Shanks encouraged. "We've got a lot of go and gimp in us yet, and bimeby maybe there'll be a way out. Let's don't worry yet awhile."

"I'm almost blind with sleep," said Al a little later. "I feel as though I'll have to lie down and sleep, whatever happens. I'm staggering with it."

"There's a lot of ginger in you yet," cheered Shanks. "Keep pumpin' your legs. You ain't got half as much legs to move as I have, and see how I keep mine goin'. And I've got twice as much nose to freeze as you have. By ginger, it's froze now!" And Shanks began vigorously rubbing the frosted member. "Rub yourn, Al."

Kuglutook had at last ceased shouting. A look of dumb, hopeless despair had settled upon his face, and the dogs were hard'y moving at all, when suddenly they descrie a little way ahead the other sledges, and the Eskimos standing in a group. As they drew wearily up

and halted, the men were talking low and earnestly, and evidently discussing something of vast import.

"I'm going to sleep while we're waiting," said Al, settling wearily upon the sledge.

"No you ain't!" declared Shanks. "You're goin' to keep awake and see what they're drivin' at. If you go to sleep you'll freeze, and I ain't goin' to let you."

The voices of the Eskimos fell upon Al's ears in a dull, monotonous undertone, but Shanks, seizing his arm, drew him to his feet and prevented him from sitting down again, at the same time endeavoring to get the drift of the conversation, though the men spoke so rapidly that only now and again could he recognize a word. From these occasional words, however, he interpreted the conversation to be a discussion of something in connection with the cave.

Presently Sipsook, acting as spokesman, addressed Shanks and Al, selecting words that Shanks could understand, and speaking slowly:

"In the igloo where we found you," said Sipsook, "you burned oil in stone lamps that

had been made by our people. Where did you get them?"

A quick apprehension came to Shanks. The Eskimos had recognized the stone lamps that had been taken from the old graves. Their superstitious natures connected the disaster that had befallen them with the lamps that belonged to their dead. They believed the departed spirits had caused the misfortune to be visited upon them as a punishment for permitting their white companions to desecrate the graves.

Shanks' brain worked rapidly. The stone lamps had been necessary to their lives, and he had felt that Providence had guided them to the lamps in their hour of need, and that he had done no wrong in taking them. Now he knew that something must be done to pacify the hearts of these men. Unless he could divert their minds from this obsession, their savage nature would assert itself and doubtless Al and himself would be either abandoned or put to death to satisfy and appease the anger of the departed spirits.

These thoughts passed through Shanks'

mind in far less time than has been required in writing them, and before replying to Sipsook he turned to Al, and in a low, tense voice directed:

"Al, take your rifle in your hands and step a few feet away, and be ready to use it if I tell you to. We may have t' fight t' save ourselves."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PARLEY AND ITS OUTCOME

SHANKS' words came as a distinct shock to Al, and served to arouse him temporarily from the half-stupor into which he had fallen, for he had sunk again upon one of the sledges. Now he arose, with his rifle in his hands, his brain not yet fully awake, but active enough to do as he was bid.

"We are in a bad place," said Shanks, indirectly answering Sipsook and purposely misunderstanding him.

"I ask about the stone lamps in your igloosuk," persisted Sipsook. "Where did you get them? A white man could not make stone lamps like those."

"No," evaded Shanks, "they're Eskimo made. They are good to warm the igloo and to make fire to boil our tea."

"Who were the Eskimos that made them?" insisted Sipsook. "Did you take them from the graves?"

"The white man's God, who knows all things, and knew where they were, guided us to them when we needed them and would have frozen without them," answered Shanks. "He could take us off the ice now if we asked Him the right way."

There was another parley among the Eskimos. Shanks' evasive answers, and what he had said about the white man's God, delivered in broken Eskimo, did not satisfy them. Sipsook had asked direct questions, and had not received direct answers.

"Al," said Shanks reverently, "we're in a bad fix, and it looks like we're gettin' in worse, and 'twon't do any harm to pray th' Lord to help us out. You know when we found them lamps and the cave, we said th' Almighty had guided us to 'em, and I guess He did. Maybe He'd help us now if we asked Him. I don't believe He wants us to die yet, and these Eskimos are goin' t' kill us, sure as preachin', if something don't happen. I can't keep 'em pacified much longer."

The parley was at an end and Sipsook interrupted with the question:

"You said the white man's God guided you to the stone lamps. Did your tongue speak the truth?"

"Yes," answered Shanks.

"Can the white man's God show us a way to get off the ice?" asked Sipsook.

"If we ask Him in the right way, and then do our best to help ourselves," asserted Shanks, adding, as a precaution to gain time, "He might not do it just as soon as we ask Him, but He will after awhile."

"Ask Him," commanded Sipsook, "the right way."

The Eskimos were watching the boys expectantly. Shanks had been reared by a Christian mother, who had taught him by her example a childlike, simple faith in prayer, but in his years at sea he had drifted far from all things religious. The inbred teachings of childhood, however, no matter how far apparently forgotten in later years, will assert themselves in moments of surprise and necessity, and now in his hour of need, when his own and Al's life were at stake, it was quite natural that Shanks' thoughts should turn to his mother and

the God to whom she prayed with abiding faith.

"Al," said Shanks, "the Eskimos want us to pray. I never had much practice prayin', Al. My mother taught me to say the Lord's prayer and I say it every night after I get in my bunk, but that's about the limit of my prayin'. How be you on prayin', Al?"

"I can—say the Lord's prayer," mumbled Al. "You try, Shanks."

"I'll do the best I can," the ever-willing Shanks volunteered, "but I'm afraid my prayin' now just because we're in a fix won't count for much when I've been lettin' it slide other times."

Then Shanks directed them all to kneel, and he knelt—there on the ice in the yellow moonlight, by the black waters—and this is the prayer he offered:

"Good Lord, we're caught out here on the ice in a bad fix. We don't know how to get out of it. We want you to help us to make land, somehow. Give us the right course, Lord. We ain't come to you very often, Lord. We been forgettin' you, and mostly we ain't lived

the way you want us to, but get us out of this fix, good Lord, and I promise, for one, I'll never forget you again the way I been doin' right along. I won't be ashamed to get on my knees in the fo'c's'le again, and I'll live as straight as I know how. I can't say about the other fellers, but I guess they'll be all right, too. Amen."

"Now, Al," suggested Shanks, "let's say the Lord's prayer together. Maybe it'll help some."

And together they said the Lord's prayer.

"Al," said Shanks when they arose, "I'm feelin' better about it already, don't you?"

The teams of Matuk and Sipsook were the least exhausted, and recognizing the wearied condition of the boys, the former invited Shanks, and the latter Al, to ride upon their sledges. Al accepted thankfully, but Shanks declined to ride, and Sipsook set out again along the ice edge in advance, with Matuk next, Shanks walking with him, and talking to Al to keep him awake, the other sledges following.

The moon had once set, and now was rising

again, and by its dim, yellow light they presently discerned a high jutting headland not far in advance, and as they approached it they observed that the belt of water was growing narrower and narrower.

Sipsook whipped his dogs into a little more speed, and soon an excited shout came back from him. It was a shout of hope and triumph, and had the effect of an electric shock upon the other drivers. The old frenzied yelling at the dogs was renewed. The former excitement returned. The men were suddenly awakened from the lethargy into which they had fallen.

Al and Shanks did not understand what Sipsook shouted, but they knew that some discovery of vast moment had been made, and they, too, roused from sleepy lethargy with a fresh thrill of hope. Al sprang off the sledge.

CHAPTER XXX

A SAVAGE CEREMONY

"**W**HAT is it Shanks? What did he say?" he asked excitedly.

"I dunno," exclaimed Shanks, "but it must be something good."

A few moments and they overtook Sipsook crossing upon solid ice to the land. The floe upon which they were marooned was in contact at the point of the cape, the northern end, over which they had been traveling so long, swinging slowly away from land, the southern end swinging landward, with the cape as a pivot at the point of contact.

The dogs were exhausted, and rest for animals and men was imperative. The Eskimos, with long knives of whalebone, began cutting snow blocks and building them in circular form until presently a snow igloo was erected, with a hole cut low down in the side for a door.

Muskox and reindeer skins, with which the sledges were provided, were now taken into

the igloo. Some of the skins were spread for a bed, and when all were within the door was sealed with a great block of snow.

The snow igloo was cold and crowded, but Al and Shanks were so completely wearied that the instant they lay down they fell asleep and slept so soundly that when the Eskimos arose after four hours' rest, and withdrew from the igloo, they were not aroused.

They had been sleeping, indeed, for nearly fourteen uninterrupted hours when Shanks was awakened by voices outside, and a dull, peculiar light filtering through the snow walls of the igloo. He sat up and listened, but could make nothing of it, and, reaching over, he shook Al vigorously.

"What's up, Harry?" Al asked sleepily.

"'Tain't Harry. It's me. Wake up, and we'll find out. Somethin' queer's goin' on outside, and we ain't in it," Shanks explained.

Al sat up, rubbing his eyes. Shanks could see his outline dimly in the vague light.

"Why, there's a fire somewhere!" Al exclaimed. "What is it? Where are the Eskimos?"

"It's them outside talkin', and I guess they found somethin' somewhere for a fire," said Shanks. "Leastways, it 'pears so, and I'm goin' to find out. Comin'?"

"Yes. Go ahead. My, but my nose and face are sore!" and Al felt of his nose gingerly.

"So's mine. We froze 'em on the floe," explained Shanks, as he proceeded to remove the snow block with which the Eskimos had carefully closed the entrance to the igloo.

"I'm so hungry I could eat my shoes!" said Al, with a yawn.

"So be I," said Shanks. "I'm as empty as a hogshead that ain't got anything in it."

A weird, uncanny spectacle met them as they emerged from the igloo. The Eskimos were gathered around a blazing fire of walrus blubber, performing some strange heathen rites. Their forms, standing out in silhouette against the light of leaping flames, looked wild and savage and almost unhuman — like creatures of another world — and the dogs, skulking and snarling in the outer edge of light loomed like a pack of hungry wolves, restless to attack some prey.

Shanks and Al stood for a little beyond the dogs and the glow, uncertain whether or not to break in upon the circle.

"Some of our heathen doings," suggested Shanks in an undertone.

"I wonder where they got the fat for the fire?" asked Al.

"I dunno where in time they got it," said Shanks. "They must have left us an' gone huntin' and killed something."

They drew nearer the fire, and the Eskimos, observing them, invited them at once to join the circle. The ceremony was interrupted while a place was made for them, and it was explained that three walrus and a seal had been killed. A piece of seal meat was thrown upon the fire, and when badly charred and partially cooked, Sipsook drew it out of the flame and presented it to the boys. Upon cutting into it the center of the meat was found to be raw and bloody, and under ordinary circumstances it would have been most repulsive to them, but now, half-famished as they were, they ate their strong, highly flavored meal with relish.

For a little longer the ceremony continued.

Then as the blubber burned low, the men rose and hurriedly prepared for departure.

It soon became evident that the party was to separate. A small portion of the meat and blubber was loaded on each of two of the sledges. The third sledge was heavily laden, and the surplus meat carried into the snow igloo, and the igloo sealed with snow. Then it was explained that Sipsook, Chevik and Korluk were to continue to a hunting place farther south, and would later visit the cave on their way northward. Kuglutook and Matuk were to return at once with the sledge-load of meat to their families, and Shanks and Al were to accompany them.

Adieus were finally said, Kuglutook shouted at his dogs, and glad enough Al and Shanks were to be moving, for the burning blubber had shed no heat upon the frozen atmosphere, and they were stiff with cold. They were glad, too, that they should soon relieve Harry's anxiety for their safety, which they were certain was keen; and that they were turning homeward again, for they had learned to think and speak now of their cave as home.

It was an hour later when the dogs, traveling at a steady, monotonous gait, suddenly and eagerly began sniffing, and without warning and in spite of the heavy load, with noses to the ice, turned seaward and broke into a run.

Instantly the drivers became quite as excited and eager as the dogs, and Al and Shanks, though they did not in the least know what it was all about, caught the contagion of their companions, and, forgetful of the cold and their recent adventure on the floe, ran as fast and as eagerly as the dogs and Eskimos ran.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN LIGHT CAME AGAIN

PRESENTLY, in the moonlight, they glimpsed a great moving object far ahead on the ice. Immediately it came into view, Kuglutook cut the dogs loose from the sledge, and, free from the burden, they shot forward, giving wild, eager yelps.

Quickly they overtook the fleeing animal, and, surrounding it, held it at bay. As the boys ran forward, rifles in hand, they discovered a great polar bear. The animal was charging the dogs, which had become a pack of snarling, snapping wolves.

The two Eskimos were eagerly running toward the bear in the wake of the dogs, and retreating when the bear lunged, and shouting to the boys excited directions which neither of them could in the least understand. It was a wild, weird picture—bear—dogs—savages—the great ice—the green-white moonlight.

"I guess they want us to use our guns!"

Shanks presently interpreted. "That's the thing to do, anyhow!"

"I'm afraid of hitting one of the dogs!" said Al, who had several times brought his rifle to his shoulder.

"If the pesky beasts would only break away!" ejaculated Shanks, who was also trying for a shot.

A moment later the opening came, the two rifles flashed together, and the great animal plunged to the ice. In an instant the whole pack of dogs was upon the carcass, and it required the combined efforts of Kuglutook, Matuk and the dog whip to drive them back.

In an incredibly short time the two Eskimos removed the pelt, flung the offal to the dogs, and cut the meat into convenient pieces. Then the dogs were driven back and attached again to the sledge, the sledge brought forward, and though already heavily laden, the bear's meat was lashed upon it and the journey resumed.

After a long and tedious ten hours' continuous plodding through moonlight and black darkness, the sledge at length drew up before the cave. Harry had heard the approaching

dogs and was at the tunnel entrance to greet his friends, and a joyful reunion it was. He had observed the parting of the ice and had believed his friends lost, and was quite overcome by emotion.

"I'd made up my mind I'd never see you again!" he choked. "When I saw the ice had gone adrift, and you didn't come back, I was sure you had perished!"

"And Shanks and I were worried about what would become of you if we didn't come back," said Al.

"We did have one tarnation of a time," broke in Shanks, "and we were pretty nigh givin' up."

The Eskimos followed them into the cave for a few hours' rest before continuing northward. Tea was made over the stone lamps, and what a meal they had of fried venison and tea!

"Why," declared Al, "it's a banquet fit for a king! I never expect, as long as I live, to enjoy a meal so much again!"

"It's some feed, all right!" agreed Shanks, pouring himself a fourth cup of tea. "We ain't

had any kind of grub since we left here except some half-cooked seal meat, scorched in a blubber fire. My, but this tea goes fine!"

"I never would have stood it if it hadn't been for Sharks," said Al, after detailing to Harry what had happened on the ice. "I'd have given up if he hadn't kept punching me along."

"'Pish and fiddlesticks!' as the old man would say," and Shanks grinned at the recollection of Captain Mugford's favorite expletive. "I was pretty nigh all in myself, but I saw the way you kept goin', and I says to myself, 'Al, there's the gamest young feller I ever saw, and I'm goin' to keep my legs goin' just as long as he does his'n, and I ain't goin' to let him outdo me.' But you had me pretty nigh busted, Al, before we got ashore."

"And," continued Al, "I was a baby, and you had to keep me awake and moving or I'd have fallen asleep on the sledge and frozen stiff."

The bear's pelt and a portion of the meat fell to Al and Shanks as their share of the booty, and after a brief rest the two Eskimos, with many expressions of good will, drove for-

ward and quickly disappeared into the mysterious northern wastes from which they had come.

And so it came to pass that the Eskimos came and departed, and the monotony of the long darkness was broken, and, as it turned out presently, the boys made five excellent friends who were to repay them in due time in a most unexpected manner for their hospitality.

The visit of the Eskimos was the chief topic of conversation in the days that followed. It served to lift them out of the morose and gloomy condition of mind into which they had fallen. Their isolation to some degree had been broken by this brief contact with others, struggling like themselves for existence. Their own bitter fight against nature became less hard, and they were better content with their lot.

"Seemed like we was pretty hard up," remarked Shanks one day, "but see how much better off we were than those Eskimos when they came here half starved. No matter how bad off a feller thinks he is, there's always somebody worse off. That's what Uncle Zeke's

always sayin', and he says that goes to show we ought to be thankful for what we have, no matter how poor off we think we be."

"That's a fact," agreed Al.

The new season of moonlight came and passed, but now the twilight dawn of coming day was brightening and lengthening rapidly with each twenty-four hours. The lifting veil of night revealed to the boys their own ghastly and unnatural appearance. Their faces and hands had taken on a greenish-yellow cast. Their unkempt hair reached to their shoulders. They would hardly have been recognized as the three who had gone adrift a few months earlier.

This was a period of terrific winds and snowstorms—this dawning period of the day. For almost a whole week the boys were held prisoners in the cave, and again the ice began to move with its old roar and crash. Then followed a week of calm, and intensely bitter cold. It was at this time that the noonday sky was, one day, glorified with a marvelous blaze and riot of color. Reds and purples and oranges flamed from horizon to zenith.

"The good old sun is coming!" exclaimed Al, as the boys stood watching and enjoying the spectacle. "He's almost in sight!"

"It's like coming back to life to see it," said Harry.

"It kinder gives me a chokin' feelin'," admitted Shanks. "The sun'll soon be up, but it'll be a good long spell before we can expect to see the schooner. The waitin' won't be so bad, though, with the sun shinin'."

"We can move around more, and hunt," suggested Al. "The hardest part of it all has been the darkness and keeping idle in the cave about all the while."

It was three days later that the sun appeared. Every day the boys had been looking for it from the summit of a near-by hill, and now, when its glowing upper limb appeared for a few minutes above the horizon before it sank again, they were almost overcome by emotion.

"Now she'll be poking higher up into the sky every day," said Shanks gleefully, as they picked their way down the rocky hillside.

"Isn't it glorious to see it again!" exclaimed Harry. "I'll never take the sun for granted as

long as I live. Sunlight and sunshine will mean more to me than they ever did before. It's the most wonderfully beautiful thing I ever saw. There's no wonder savages worship the sun sometimes."

"It's a mighty beautiful thing for us just now," remarked Shanks. "We need all the light it can give us to hunt, for we've got to get a seal, and pretty quick, too. We're most out of blubber."

"'Most out?" asked Harry in alarm. "How long will it last?"

"Two days, maybe," said Shanks, "and we're just gettin' into the coldest part of the winter, too. It's always colder just after the sun comes. We got to get oil, somehow."

"It's get out and hustle every minute we can see, for seals, then," declared Al.

"When the oil's gone there'll be no way of melting ice for water," said Shanks, "and we've got to have fire, for we can't get along without water. That's part of it. The other part is, the cave'll get about as cold as outdoors without the lamps, and we couldn't live in it very long that way."

"We'll just do our best, then, for seals," remarked Harry, with a determined, aggressive manner that had been growing upon him of late.

But the ice edge was a full half mile from shore, and the seals were shy and hard to approach, and try as they would, none were killed that day or the next. As a required economy, two of the three lamps were not lighted now. The remaining lamp served to melt ice and cook frozen deer and fox meat, but it was far from sufficient to warm the cave. With this reduced consumption of oil, however, the supply was sufficient for an additional two days.

"We can break up the boxes and burn them," suggested Al.

"They'll help some," agreed Shanks, "but they wouldn't last more than two or three days even if we only used 'em to make tea. We've got to kill a seal, somehow."

Another day and another day passed, and then, as the boys were returning to their cheerless cave empty-handed and disheartened in the thickening dusk, there broke upon the still, cold air the wild howl of Arctic dogs. Down

on the ice foot appeared two long black lines, which presently developed, as they approached, into two dog-trains and heavily-laden sledges. As the sledges turned up the ice foot toward the cave, and the boys recognized the three Eskimos who had remained in the South, their hearts bounded with joy and relief.

"They've had a good hunt!" exclaimed Shanks, as the three ran to meet the travelers. "Maybe they'll let us have some oil to help us out!"

And so it proved. The Eskimos had, indeed, killed many walrus and seals. Much meat and blubber had been cached for future needs at the hunting places, and they were pleased that they could return the kindness they had received with gifts of oil.

And then it came to pass that while the Eskimos ate, and drank a mug of hot tea that Shanks prepared for them, they revealed some startling and exciting information.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE "SEA LION"

THREE days' journey from the place where Al and Shanks had turned back with Kuglutook and Matuk, the Eskimos had found walrus plentiful and the conditions favorable for hunting, and there, meeting with success, they had tarried. Other Eskimos from the south had joined them, for it was a well-known hunting ground among the natives, where it was usual for hunting parties to congregate during moonlight periods.

From these Eskimos they learned that two ships were wintering in a bay but one day's journey to the southward from the hunting place, and when they had finished their hunt they visited the vessels. They had gone aboard them and had been given food to eat and hot tea to drink. The man who gave them the food and tea on one of the ships was a very large man clad in white, and when they described him to Shanks they laughed heartily. The

head man of all on that ship had a loud voice, like the wind in a gale.

All this the Eskimos related partly by pantomime and by selecting words that Shanks could understand, and he, on his part, interpreted the story to Al and Harry.

"By hickory!" exclaimed Shanks. "That's the *Sea Lion*! The big feller is Spuds, and the loud-voiced one's the old man, sure as preachin'!"

"It surely is!" echoed Al. "There couldn't be another two like them on any other ship!"

"It must—it must be the *Sea Lion*!" exclaimed Harry.

And immediately the three were as excited as ever they could be.

"Ask them more about it!" urged Al. "Ask them if they told the men on the ship about meeting us here!"

But no, the Eskimos had said nothing about that. They were so interested in the ship and the things they saw that they had not mentioned it.

"Maybe they'll go back and take us to the ship!" suggested Al enthusiastically. "See if you can't get them to do it!"

Shanks used all of his persuasive powers. He begged them, and cajoled them, and tried to bribe them with trading goods. But no, they must go on to their families with food, and then they were to hunt the muskox. But later, and before the ships would be freed from their berth in the ice, they would return with their sledges and take their three friends to the ships. And this was the best they would promise.

The Eskimos were preparing to leave when they most casually mentioned that not far above their hunting camp they had come upon a wrecked boat in the ice foot, and had found the frozen bodies of two men. Many questions followed, and a detailed description of the boat and wreckage and of the dead men, until no doubt remained as to who the unfortunates were.

"Billings and Manuel!" exclaimed Shanks, finally. "They must have been caught in that wind that 'most blew us away.'"

"I'm sorry," said Al. "I hoped they were safe on the ship."

"Poor fellows!" sympathized Harry. "And I've been thinking hard things about them all winter for going away with the boat and leaving us here, and believing if we had gone with them we could have found the ship."

"We'd likely be as dead as they are now if we had," remarked Shanks, adding reverently, "I guess the Almighty kept us here to save our lives."

And so it came to pass that when the Eskimos presently departed, the boys were more elated and happy and hopeful than they had been for many weeks. The *Sea Lion* was safe, that was certain, and she was not so far away. They even considered setting out on foot to find her, but Shanks objected to this.

"We could haul the stuff we need on the sledge," suggested Harry. "We could take our bedding and grub enough, and one of the stone lamps."

"And suppose a storm set in, where'd we be at?" asked Shanks.

"Couldn't we make some sort of a shift for

sleeping and lying up, if we had to, by making tents of the tarpaulins?" asked Al.

"Nope!" objected Shanks, most positively. "This is a time when we're goin' to have wind a-plenty, and we'd have our tarps and everything else blown away, and we'd go the way Billings and Manuel did. Nope, not for me! I'm goin' to stay right here in my humble but snug little home till the Eskimos come back."

And so, in the end, they agreed that any effort on their part, unassisted by Eskimos, to reach the ship would be a foolhardy and reckless undertaking. It was hard to curb their first impatience, but they had learned many lessons in restraint during the preceding months.

The weeks that followed dragged slowly and tediously past. The temperature at times dropped to points considerably below any that had been experienced during the season of darkness, and terrific, prolonged storms forbade hunting, save during intervals of a day or two of calm, which occasionally occurred.

On some of these calm days flocks of ptarmigans were seen, and a few of them killed,

and a welcome addition and change they were to the menu of venison, fox, and seal meat. But usually now the ptarmigans were wild and hard to approach, and were always a luxury.

Finally, late in April came an extended season of calm and sunshine. The days were long now. Spring was at hand, and the sun was sending out his warmth to mellow the world. Little auks began to appear, and presently came in millions to repopulate the cliff rookeries.

Every day some new species of bird was discovered. Then came the eider ducks, wild geese, terns, gulls, and innumerable other wild fowl, and seals by the hundreds sunned themselves upon the far-reaching ice.

The lengthening days, the warm sunshine and the returning life brought fresh joy to the hearts of the boys. They indulged in long tramping expeditions. Their guns yielded them an abundance and variety of food. Their old buoyant, hopeful spirits returned, and a suppressed excitement took possession of them as they awaited the promised coming of their Eskimo friends.

"I hope they'll keep their word," remarked Harry, one day.

"Oh, they'll keep their word," assured Shanks. "They come down to the s'uth'ard to live in summer, anyway. They'll be along, all right, before the ice goes out."

"They'll have to come down to get all that walrus meat they said they cached, too," said Al.

"Yes," agreed Shanks, "they've got to come this way to get that, and they've got to come before the ice goes out, for after the ice goes they can't use their dogs."

And so it came to pass. One day a distant shout was heard, and the whine of a dog, and when the boys in high expectation and excitement ran down to the ice foot they discovered eight sledges and many people approaching. At last the Eskimos were coming, and at last they were to return to the ship.

Then followed a tumult of fighting dogs, as two teams clashed, a babel of voices, and the boys were surrounded by the dusky, good-natured faces of men, women, and children.

It was rush and hurry now. Such things

as the boys would need for the journey, including their guns and ammunition and the fox pelts they had accumulated, were packed upon sledges. The trading goods and things that would not be needed immediately, were stored in the cave to be called for later, and in an incredibly short time they were on their way.

"I hate to leave the old cave," remarked Al, as they set forward. "It seems like leaving home, and I'll always have pleasant remembrances of it."

"It wa'n't such a bad place to spend the winter," Shanks commented. "We had some scraps there, but 'twa'n't the fault of the cave."

"No," agreed Al, "it was our fault, and the darkness."

"And we scrapped only when we weren't busy at something," said Harry. "It was a fine, snug shelter."

The Eskimos were tireless travelers. The days were long, and sometimes it seemed to the boys they would never halt for rest. And weary enough they were when at the end of three long marches the sledges stopped for a



The Eskimos were tireless travelers

day at the place where the walrus had been killed and the meat cached, in winter.

The Eskimos pointed out to the boys when they passed it, the wrecked boat, and told them that they had carried the remains of Billings and Manuel to the rocks above, and covered them, after their manner of burial, with boulders. It was the only service they could render the unfortunate strangers.

When the dogs were harnessed and the sledges on their way again, the hearts of the young travelers beat high with excitement. Miles never seemed so long, and at last when the drivers announced that the ship was near, and presently they rounded a point of rocks and the stanch old *Sea Lion*, fast frozen in the ice, appeared before them, they choked with emotion.

Men, moving about on the deck, paused in their work to watch curiously the approaching sledges. There was no excitement, and the sailors apparently had only a passing interest.

"Seems like they're takin' the return of their lost mates mighty cool," suggested Shanks.

"None of 'em seem to be gettin' excited. They act like we'd just been away on a day's cruise."

"I believe they think we're Eskimos," said Harry. "They don't know us, and no wonder. We don't look like white people."

"That's so!" exclaimed Shanks. "Let's give three good cheers."

The cheers were given with a will, and at once there was commotion on the deck of the *Sea Lion*. Men ran to the rail. Captain Mugford could be seen pushing through and peering at the approaching travelers. They could make him out now quite distinctly. Spuds' vast bulk, enfolded in his apron, waddled out to join them. His size and his apron identified him. Then suddenly the men seemed to have gone wild. They waved their hats and cheered and cheered. And then the Sky Pilot and Daddy and two or three others dropped over the side of the vessel to the ice and came running to meet the boys.

"We looked everywhere for you!" declared the Sky Pilot, wringing the hands of the three boys. "We gave you up long ago as lost, and

this is just as though you had risen out of your graves!"

"Pretty healthy lookin' corpses, ain't they!" exclaimed Daddy, slapping Harry on the back with his big, brawny hand in the exuberance of his joyous welcome. "But jiminy! Look at 'em, mates! See the hair! Shanks, your feet are bigger'n ever, and you've grown a yard! And, by hickory, they ain't boys any more! They're men!"

Captain Mugford was the first to greet them as they reached the deck. He seized their hands, and crushed them in delight, bellowing a succession of welcomes:

"The stowaways! And Shanks! Glad to see you back safe! Yes, glad to see you! Thought you were lost! Spuds! Spuds, there! Take these lads for'ard and feed 'em! Feed 'em well, now! Why aren't you in the galley getting 'em something to eat? Don't you know they're hungry? Look sharp, now!"

"I just came up to see 'em, sir," answered Spuds, seriously. "I'll have something ready in a jiffy."

"Pish and fiddlesticks! Plenty of time to see 'em! Hurry, now, and feed 'em!"

And so it came to pass that presently, when Mr. Jones and Mr. Dugmore and every man of the crew had given the three adventurers a rousing welcome, they were at last seated luxuriously at table, enjoying what they declared to be the best meal they had ever eaten in their lives. There was fried pork, and delicious white bread, and butter, and molasses—good, black molasses, that tasted better at that minute than the whitest of honey could ever have tasted. And coffee! Oh, but it was a feast!

"And here you be again!" greeted Spuds, genially, when they were seated. "Safe and sound and natural as ever, exceptin' dirt and extry long hair and the unnatural sort of clothes you're wearin'. I'm glad to see you."

"We're glad to see you, Mr. Spuddington!" said Al, heartily.

"This is just luxury!" exclaimed Harry. "You're a brick, Mr. Spuddington, to fix up such a meal for us!"

"You've had some hard times, I take it," remarked Spuds, running his forefinger over his forehead to remove the ever present moisture, and flirting what he had garnered upon the floor. "Some hard times, I guess. I've heard tell of the hard times my ancestors had that came over on the *Mayflower*, and I shouldn't wonder if you had some times almost as hard as they had."

"Pretty nigh as hard, I guess," admitted Shanks. "But we wa'n't so bad off; we had a good snug cave to live in."

When presently they appeared on deck Captain Mugford called them to the cabin, and must needs have every detail of their winter's experience. And when he had heard their story he praised them for courage and pluck and resourcefulness, and declared that men who could do what they had done could make their way anywhere in the world.

"Fine lot of blue fox pelts you brought back! Fine lot!" said he. "I'll pay you ten dollars for them. Hundred and twenty pelts in all; that's twelve hundred dollars for all. Do you take it?"

"They're worth more," suggested Shanks, with his Yankee instinct to trade.

"Pish and fiddlesticks!" blurted the Captain. "Every cent they're worth! But I'll make it twelve dollars. No more! Not a farthing more! That makes fourteen hundred and forty dollars."

"All right," agreed Shanks, "if Al and Harry are willin'. We three are partners."

In view of the fact that neither Al nor Harry had expected to receive anything for the skins, they were willing enough to accept the offer, and the bargain was made.

"Big lot of money!" said Captain Mugford. "You'll be rich when you get home at this rate, you rascals! And ten dollars a month wages for each of you since you left home!"

"Wages!" exclaimed Al.

"Yes, wages!" said Captain Mugford. "Ten dollars is what Shanks gets. Give you stowaways the same."

"We weren't expecting wages," said Harry, "coming on the ship the way we did."

"Every man on my ship gets paid for his

work," Captain Mugford beamed. "Every man that shows he's good for anything."

The boys thanked him.

"Dundee steam whaler has a berth just over here," continued the Captain. "She'll get away ahead of us. Better write letters to your folks and let her take 'em. Hear from you sooner, and relieve their minds. Write good letters now. Tell 'em you're strong and husky as young porpoises. Do it right away. Get out of here now, and clean up and write those letters. Get out, I say! What you waiting here for?"

And so it came to pass that the letters were written and delivered to the Dundee steamer. And anxiously they awaited the break-up of the winter and the passing of the ice that had held them prisoners for so long.

At last there came a time when the sun did not set at all, and there was no night. Everywhere was slush and running water. Great boulders upon the mountain sides were loosened and came crashing down into the sea with thunderous roar. Gales rose without

warning and quickly subsided, to be followed by wonderful days of calm and beauty.

At length the ice began to move. Familiar icebergs changed their position, and open water appeared. Finally the great body of ice began its long-expected movement, and a few hours later, save for ever-present floe and icebergs, the sea lay glimmering and free before them.

Then it was that the Dundee steamer, smoke belching from her funnels, signalled farewell and moved from her anchorage, bearing the letters that were to carry thanksgiving and joy to the heartbroken parents of Al and Harry.

And then it was, too, that the *Sea Lion* spread her canvas to the breeze, and with three rousing cheers from the men, turned her prow seaward. The stowaways, to be sure, were to pass through many stirring adventures still, before they should again tread the familiar streets of New Bedford, but those are adventures that belong to another story, and for the present we shall say adieu to them.

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